Mockingbirds

by Jardix

Summary: Two strangers arrive from the future and attack the
Triskelion long before the fall of SHIELD. Who they are is soon
solved; but why they're here, and how they intend on getting home, is
a mystery only the Agents of SHIELD can solve. Including all of the
SHIELD team both past and present, as well as the Avengers.

    1. Triskelion

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settings of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. I own only the characters
I myself have created. Any views, opinions, or beliefs of these
characters does not necessarily reflect the views, opinions or
beliefs of myself.**

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><p>The Triskelion was a beautiful building. A work of art, as well
as a fortress. Walls of glass reached high into the blue sky, with
agents running back and forth inside. It was the hub of S.H.I.E.L.D.,
and one of the most secure facilities on earth.<p>

As the two strangers stood on the riverbank nearby, they admired the
architecture fondly. The man, a tall, thickly built soldier with
steely eyes and roughly cut hair, was already planning their
invasion.

"It's bigger in person."

The woman, a shorter, more petite form with playful brown eyes and
strawberry blonde hair smiled mischievously.

"At least thirty one floors, right?"

"Thirty first floor, thirty _first_ floor!" The man laughed.

"He loved to tell that story, didn't he?"

They were both suddenly sober as the memory faded. Without a word, they both headed back towards the city. They had rented a helicopter, and neither one wanted to miss their scheduled ride.

Both wore black tactical gear with familiar looking armor; both were armed with sleek black weapons that resembled S.H.I.E.L.D side-arms. They were both eager and anxious to complete their mission, and it showed in their expressions. Liam, the man, was stony and unreadable as he went over their plan. Aria was excited, and her energy seemed contagious. Her red hair bounced as she walked and her eyes seemed determined to soak in the views. Ten minutes later, they were in the air.

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><p>"Director Fury; I have that report." Agent Maria Hill walked quickly into Fury's office, holding a tablet close to her chest. Her face was clouded in worry, and her voice was hard as she spoke.<p>

"Let's see it then. Do you have any additional information?" Fury took the tablet from her and read it while perched on the glass desk, skimming the report with his good eye. Hill bit her lip before she answered.

"None. They're a complete mystery."

The report detailed what little they knew about the two 084's; two days ago they'd appeared dangerously close to Agent Coulson's plane. In mid air, without any aircraft or obvious technology to explain their presence. They'd fallen from _fifty_ thousand feet, and continued to fall, before landing somewhere in up-state New York. S.H.I.E.L.D. had sent a team to investigate, expecting to find what was left of their bodies. Instead, they found footprints. As if the two strangers had merely teleported to the spot.

They weren't Asgardian; even if one of Thor's friends had decided to literally drop in, the force of such a fall would have been like a bomb going off. But there were only footprints. To say they shouldn't have survived was the understatement of the year; they shouldn't have been anything but a puddle after such a fall.

And yet there they were, renting a helicopter not five miles away, according to their hacked surveillance feed.

"Did they file a flight plan?" Fury asked, setting the tablet on the desk behind him.

Hill shook her head ominously. "They didn't even pay for it. Their credit card turned out to be a clever fake. Unfortunately, they're already in the air."

"If they were stupid enough to try and land here…" Fury asked, stopping halfway.

"Our security would stop them long before they entered the base, sir." Hill assured him. But as she finished speaking, a new thought occurred to her.

Fury saw the expression on her face. "What is it?"

"Unless… unless they managed to pull their signature trick again." Hill grabbed the tablet and pulled up the radar system on the roof. "Their chopper is flying almost straight up, and they're directly above us!"

"How far?"

"Five thousand feet! That's nothing compared to their first jump!"

The second the idea clicked in their heads, alarms started to sound. A voice came over the loudspeakers above them.

"All tactical and security teams, report to the roof immediately!"

* * *

><p>Aria hopped out of Liam's arms and hit the concrete roof lightly. She rolled her shoulders and flexed her fingers as Liam slowly recovered.<p>

"I hate doing that…"

"It was the easiest way, you said so yourself." Aria reminded him. He shook his head to clear his vision and raised his white-knuckled hands.

"Insight won't be ready to launch for days; we'll need to do this covertly." Liam said needlessly.

"Of course. Don't you think I'm covert enough?" Aria asked in a childlike voice.

As if on cue, three men in tactical gear burst through the door to their right, rifles raised. Aria narrowed her eyes and raised her hand, concentrating on the men as they approached.

All three of them dropped to the ground, clutching at their stomachs and crotches. They tried to scream, but couldn't get enough air. Their weapons were forgotten, voices in their radios were screaming orders, and Aria kept going.

"I don't know, Aria; is _that_ covert?" Liam asked sarcastically. Aria released her grip on the men as they passed out and shrugged innocently.

"There wasn't any screaming this time!"

A dozen S.H.I.E.L.D. agents ran up the stairs, led by the leader of their Strike team, Agent Rumlow. They waited at the top of the staircase, weapons ready as they watched the door.

"Sir, aren't Captain Rogers and Agent Romanoff supposed to be here?" One nervous agent asked.

Rumlow shook his head and rolled his shoulders angrily. "On covert assignment elsewhere. We're on our own."

The door opened quickly, and Liam strode boldly into view. On instinct, all of the S.H.I.E.L.D. agents opened fire, and hundreds of bullets flew towards him. He didn't even flinch as they impacted his head, chest, and arms. As each of the lead slugs hit him, they fell to the floor harmlessly. He stared angrily at them as they fired again and again, trying in vain to kill him.

Finally, they all clicked on empty, and Rumlow bellowed out an order. "Reload!"

"Not likely." Liam snarled. He tapped his ear, and sun glasses slowly emerged, forming over his eyes like water running over a rock. As the glass formed, information streamed onto the lenses. All of the agents in front of him appeared in red, and Liam stepped forward.

He didn't even reach for his weapon; he just gently touched each man as he passed him. One agent sank to the floor with a scream, every bone in his body shattered. Another tried to back up, but there was no room to maneuver. He dropped like his friend, with blood running out of his eyes. Liam continued down the line, ever so gently tapping each man as he walked past. A few agents had managed to reload their weapons, and bullets started to fly again.

Liam held out his hand and caught each round as they fell from his chest with casual indifference. He missed a few, but didn't bother to pick them up. As he looked down the stairwell at the reinforcements pushing their way up the stairs, he threw the fistful of lead downward.

Every bullet flew outwards as if fired from a gun, and another half-dozen agents fell screaming to the ground. Liam kept walking, killing almost casually as he slowly descended the ladder. His glasses still only showed red for each agent he slaughtered.

Aria appeared on the stairs above him, watching the grim slaughter as it happened. But when Liam came to Rumlow on a landing below her, she perked up. _This ought to be interesting…_

Rumlow had realized bullets weren't doing the trick. He whipped out a knife and started slashing at the strange man, each strike getting faster and faster. But each blow landed like a spoon on a bouncy-ball; nothing stuck, and Rumlow was getting tired fast. Liam sucked the force out of each blow, enjoying the look of growing terror on the agent's face.

Finally, Liam grabbed him by the neck and held him against the wall.

"What… are… you…?" He gasped. Liam only grinned maliciously.

"What's the matter, Brock?" Aria called down from above. She wasn't using her own powers, she was content to see Liam exercise his own. "Don't you recognize us?"

"You are weaker than I imagined." Liam whispered. And he shattered the man. His bones didn't break as the shockwave hit him; they were ground to dust. His veins didn't rupture, they were shredded. He muscles weren't ripped, they were torn apart.

A puddle of blood and gore sank to the floor, soaking the tattered remains of a S.H.I.E.L.D. uniform as they went. Aria slowly descended the stairs as the rest of the agents retreated, picking her way among the bodies carefully.

"Watch your step." Liam said casually. "Wouldn't want to slip in this mess."

* * *

><p>Hill and Fury watched on the security camera as Rumlow was obliterated. Hill's mouth hung open in shock, while Fury looked immensely disturbed.<p>

"So, not Asgardian?"

"If they are, they're like no other we've seen or heard of." Hill answered slowly.

"How fast can we get the Avengers here?"

"Not fast enough; they're still descending and we're running out of agents to send." Hill scrolled through camera feeds on her tablet, following the strangers as they made their way through the base.

"Have they left anyone alive?" Fury demanded, staring at the piles of bodies.

"A few. Analysts, scientists, even a few low level agents. But we've lost the Strike team and most of the tactical teams. Agent John Garrett is moving towards them now with one his new agents in tow. I ordered him to fall back but he's not responding." Hill pointed the two figures out to Fury on the screen.

"They don't stand a chance, do they?"

* * *

><p>"My, that's an awful lot of redâ€¦" Aria observed, looking around at the piles of bodies through her sunglasses. The screen fed her names, dates, and other information for each agent. Liam dropped a handful of bullets and stepped over another body.<p>

"I hate killing like this. Crossbones deserved what I gave him and moreâ€¦" He said in a pained tone. "Some of these people had families."

Aria looked sympathetic and squeezed his shoulder gently. "You know we had to."

"That's the only reason I volunteered for this."

Their conversation was interrupted by two more men approaching, guns drawn. Aria moved behind Liam instinctively.

"Hey there!" One of the men said amiably, waving at them. The man behind him gulped and shot him a nervous look.

Liam waited as the facial recognition loaded their information and

studied the results.

"One red. One green. But they're pretty close together." Liam noted.

"Hey there, cutie!" Aria said with a grin, peeking around Liam's head. "Agent Triplet; but you go by Trip, right?"

Trip responded only by tightening his finger on the trigger slowly.

"Why don't you come over here for a second?" Aria asked, gesturing him over like he was a child.

"I don't think so!" Trip shot back, standing closer to Garrett.

"Look, we're all friends here! Why don't we all just talk about this?" Garrett said with a broad smile, looking between the two strangers quickly.

"Agent Triplet. If you want to live, stand back!" Liam shouted. He wasn't nearly as nice or sweet as Aria.

"Or right, or left, or anywhere out of the immediate blast zone, if you catch my drift!" Aria said with a smile.

"Forget it." Liam shook his head and walked forward, snatching the gun away from Garrett quickly. The bones in Garrett's hand cracked and snapped under the pressure, and he sank to his knees with a scream. Triplet fired three rounds straight into Liam's head; all fell harmlessly onto the floor.

"Agent Triplet; this man is a Hydra sleeper agent. He's been manipulating you and the rest of S.H.I.E.L.D. for years. I am going to kill him." Liam spoke with authority and firmness, as if he were lecturing a student.

"Wait!" Aria fairly danced over to him and smiled sadistically at Garrett. "I want a turn! And then there's the whole redemption thingâ€¦?" She looked up at Liam pleadingly and batted her eyelashes.

"He's not worth it. He's a monster."

"But he's a _cute_ monster!" Aria argued.

Liam sighed and shook his head, turning to agent Triplet again.

"Drop your weapon and get on the ground. Now!"

Triplet hesitantly obeyed, watching as Garrett grunted and squirmed in pain. Aria frisked Garrett quickly, and pulled out his phone seconds later.

"It's ringing!" She said in a high pitched voice. There was a click on the other end, and Liam flinched as he heard the voice.

"Ward." He said simply. Aria looked ecstatic and started

babbling.

"Oh my gosh, I am like your biggest fan right now! It is so nice to hear your voice!"

"Who is this?" Ward asked slowly.

"Not important. This is, however." Liam snatched the phone away, set it to record video, and trained in on Garrett.

"Start talking. Your mission, especially the part pertaining to Agent Grant Douglas Ward." Liam ordered. Garrett hesitated, so Liam broke another bone in his arm.

"What do you want? A confession?" Garrett demanded.

"That'll work." Aria said with a smile.

Garrett looked back and forth between Aria and Liam, as if weighing his options. As another one of his bones cracked, so did he. "Fine, fine! I'm Hydra! Always have been! I recruited Ward and trained him to Hydra too! But you too, who do you work for? Because I've got some friends that could make your lives very-" He stopped as Liam collapsed his throat.

"Watch, Ward, and learn." Liam snarled. He folded Garrett up, listening to the sounds of bone cracking and flesh twisting. Aria watched and filmed, while Triplet threw up behind them.

When Liam was done, Garrett was dead. His body had been broken and bent into the shape of a Hydra symbol, and blood started to stain the floor.

"It's over, Ward. No more Hydra, no more mission, no more loyalty. You want this life so bad? Keep it. Screw it up, and we will come." Liam threatened.

"And stay gorgeous! Please, I'm begging you!" Aria sounded out of breath as she hung up the phone and killed the video feed. She shuddered as she threw the phone onto the mess that was John Garrett.

"Necessary? That was a little sadistic, even for you!"

"What can I say? I learned from the best." Liam said with a dark smile.

"That makes forty seven dead." Hill's face had turned white and she was trying not to vomit. Trip had been let go; he ran from the floor at a dead sprint.

"Garrett was Hydra?" Fury demanded, skimming over the gruesome details. His mind was already processing the information and making connections.

"Hydra, inside S.H.I.E.L.D.? Impossible." Hill demanded, setting the tablet down on the desk. Fury ran a hand over his head, still staring at the bloody scene.

"I don't know. Something has been hiding in the shadows of

S.H.I.E.L.D. for years." Fury admitted. "But Hydra? I just don't know."

"I've already sent the order to evacuate, but we've still got people inside the building." Hill came to her senses and got on the radio, frantically calling out orders.

"What are these things?" Fury asked himself, still staring at the video feed. The two strangers were still going, working their way down the Triskelion, killing almost randomly. Some were slaughtered, some were spared. And then it hit him like a ton of bricks; they were killing the Hydra agents and leaving the S.H.I.E.L.D.! The idea of Hydra inside S.H.I.E.L.D. was mind blowing, but the proof was going to have to wait. The two intruders were making their way to the main server room, and there was no one left to stop them.

Fury switched to the camera feed of that floor and swallowed hard. Alexander Pierce was on that floor, listening to a status report on project Insight. The only agent with combat training on the floor was Agent 13.

Aria and Liam were making good time, now that most of the corridors were clear. All of the remaining agents had been evacuated, and they were approaching the main server room.

"I wonder if there'll be anyone in here." Aria mused, looking around at the high ceilings admiringly.

"I hope so. We still have a lot of names to cross off." Liam said as he flexed his fingers.

As they were talking, the doors burst open and a beautiful woman in a S.H.I.E.L.D. uniform stepped out. She recognized the two of them and shot back into the room, drawing her weapon as she went.

"What is it about you that always sends women running away in fear?" Aria asked, shaking her head s mournfully.

"If I could answer your question, you wouldn't have had to ask it." Liam countered.

At once, they both burst through the doors dramatically. A dozen technicians were all huddled in the back of the room, with Alexander Pierce standing in the center. Agent 13 was in front of him, weapon drawn and trained on Liam.

"Oh, honey, that is so cuteâ€¦" Aria cooed. She narrowed her eyes again, and the woman dropped her gun as if it were on fire.

"Alexander Pierce. You are Hydra." Liam walked towards the pair, eyeing the man darkly.

"Get away from him!" Agent 13 stood between them, holding up her hands defensively.

Liam's glasses identified her quickly; Sharon Carter. Relative of _the_ Agent Peggy Carter, one of the founders of S.H.I.E.L.D..

"Move aside." Liam ordered. He gently put his hand on her shoulders

and tried to guide her.

She responded with an elbow to his face, screaming for Pierce to run as she attacked. Liam took the blow hard, and went down to one knee. She kneed him in the face and pulled out a knife as Aria intervened.

"Dang it, Liam!" She lashed at Sharon without thinking, and the other woman dropped to the ground in a heap. She was unconscious as Aria helped Liam up.

"Why do you always fall for the blonde ones?" Aria demanded. Liam blushed and shook off her grip.

"I didn't fall for her, I was distracted by her and trying not to hurt her." Liam explained.

"Hmm. I had no such problem. See?" She kicked at Sharon's limp form playfully as Liam advanced towards Pierce.

"I can get you anything you want! I can give you the world, just stop and think about this!" Pierce begged, backing into a desk as Liam approached.

"What I want is your head." Liam scooped up Carter's gun off of the floor and fired all ten rounds directly into his palm. Pierce flinched at each shot, staring uncomprehending at the man before him.

Liam lashed out with his right hand, chopping at Pierce's neck Karate-style. Blood splattered and Aria made a sour face. "Necessary?"

"Fitting. I cut off a head, now where are those two more that were promised?" Liam asked, looking around the room. The technicians were staring in horror as he wiped the blood off of his hand and kicked Pierce's remains out of the way.

"Let's do this and get out of here. Singularity opens inâ€¦" He checked his watch as Aria moved towards a computer. "Four hours."

"I knowâ€¦ This should only take a second." Aria concentrated hard on the monitor in front of her, trying to type quickly on the keyboard.

"Forgot how to type manually?" Liam asked in a surprised tone.

"Shut upâ€¦"

In seconds it was done. Aria stepped away from the computer and Liam led the way out of the room, glancing at Sharon Carter's limp body as they passed her.

"She'll be fine!" Aria promised. "You can ask her out later!"

"You're hilarious."

* * *

><p>"Director, I traced that call made by the woman." Hill said suddenly. She and Fury had stayed put in his office high above the carnage, watching as Pierce was slaughtered as well.<p>

"It went to a member of Agent Coulson's team; Agent Grant Ward." She brought up Ward's file and showed to Fury.

"Name doesn't ring a bellâ€¦"

"He was another one of Garrett's. I can't find any other connections." Hill shook her head and looked up at Fury pleadingly. "Shouldn't we be down there, trying to stop them?"

"Two enhanced people just walked into the most secure S.H.I.E.L.D. facility on earth and took out over half our best agents. What exactly do you think we could do?"

"So we're not even going to try?" Hill demanded.

"Maria, I'm not sure we _should_ stop them! According to these two, they're only killing Hydra!" Fury argued. Hill looked like she'd been slapped.

"Are you aware that I have a list, Agent Hill? A list of agents I trust without a shadow of a doubt? Well guess what? That list of people, and the survivors of this massacre, are looking pretty identical to me!"

"So we're going to let them have free run of the base because you trust the agents they let live?"

"I just watched one of the oldest and most trusted members of this agency admit he was Hydra on camera! Until you can explain _that_, we stay put!" Fury shouted. "Have you been able to contact anyone? Any of the Avengers?"

"Yes. But they're all too far out. The closest is Mr. Stark; he should be here in ten minutes." Hill said quietly.

"Ten minutes?" Fury laughed. "Might as well be ten hours."

"Sir, I've got something else." Hill studied her tablet carefully, slowly realizing what the data meant. "These two just dumped every one of our documents, files, and servers onto the open internet. They declassified every report, broke down every firewall, and basically slapped a welcome sign on our database."

    2. Chapter 2

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* * *

><p>"Oh my goshâ€¦ <em>oh<em> my goshâ€¦ _oh my-_"

"I get it, Aria. It's a good cheeseburger." Liam sat across from Aria, eyeing her and her mountain of food.

"And there's like, tons of it! Come on, have a quarter-pounder!" She said over a mouthful of fries.

They were sitting outside of a McDonald's only a few blocks away from the Triskelion. Chaos was in the air, but no one had looked twice at the odd couple as they ordered one of everything on the menu.

"Come on Liam! We just raided S.H.I.E.L.D. and cleaned out VonStrucker's son's trust fund! Live a little!" Aria playfully punched him in the shoulder. He stiffly shook his head and checked his watch.

"We've got three hours to catch our bus and make it back."

"I knowâ€¦"

"It won't be easy."

"I know!"

"That's going to go right your butt." Liam pointed out. Aria froze, and then very deliberately swallowed her mouthful of ice cream.

"Shut. Up." She licked her lips and picked up another hamburger. "My butt is none of your concern."

"It is if it doesn't fit on the bus." Liam argued. He smiled for the first time in a while, and Aria leaned back in her seat.

"You're still off from our landing, aren't you?" She asked knowingly.

He nodded his head and blinked slowly. "It takes a while to get back to normal. In a few days I'll be fine."

"In a few days we'll be back home! Exploring a new frontier and all that jazz." Aria said hopefully.

"Maybe."

Aria leaned forward onto the table and moaned pitifully. "Come _on_ Liam! This is like our first vacation in yearsâ€¦ Please please _please_ try and have fun!"

"I killed the man that killed our mother. I am having fun." Liam countered.

"Don't even try that, you hate killing!"

"Not always. Sometimes it's fun." Liam remembered watching Brock Rumlow disintegrate, and it brought a smile to his face.

"Well, why not hit on a girl or something? You do remember how, don't you?" She asked suspiciously.

Liam rolled his eyes and took another look around the street. People

were walking down the concrete, cars were driving past on the road, and other diners were inside, enjoying their meals. It all seemed so normal… so peaceful. And so unlike his life.

"I remember how, but not why. None of this is going to matter."

"Then you heard Fitz wrong, because from what I heard, this _all_ matters." Aria waved her hands around the table, gesturing towards the pile of food.

"Finish eating and let's go. The bus will be here soon." Liam watched the sky as if the large, black plane would happen to fly overhead. It was on its way, of course, but it probably wasn't going to pass overhead.

"Okay, give me a second." She started shoving food into her mouth as fast as possible, and Liam watched in disgust as she swallowed massive quantities of the cheap food. She moaned and grunted all the way.

* * *

><p>"Do we know what we're walking into?" Agent May asked as she made the final course correction. Coulson leaned over her shoulder to look out the cockpit windows, shaking his head as he spoke.<p>

"Not really. A couple of oh-eight-fours; possibly enhanced humans."

"Possibly?" May asked with a raised eyebrow.

"Well, Director also mentioned the possibility of Asgardians, but we think they're human. They certainly knew they way around the base."

"How many dead?"

Coulson blinked away his frustration and spit out the number. "Forty nine, at last count. Including Alexander Pierce, John Garrett, and Agent Brock Rumlow of Strike team."

"Big names. Think it was a hit?"

"Maybe. But they also dumped all of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s data on the web and scrambled the system. The killing may have been a distraction." Coulson stood up and walked out of the cockpit as they approached the tarmac, and May powered down the engines.

"We'll be landing in a few seconds." She called after him.

Coulson walked down the hallway towards the conference room where the rest of the team was gathered. Skye and Ward were side by side in front of the screen, pouring over the schematics of the Triskelion while Fitz and Simmons were arguing about the possibilities of how the 084's got their powers.

"Alright listen up." Coulson said loudly, stepped up to the table. They all turned to look at him as the plane touched down with an audible thump.

"We're going into the Triskelion to assess the damage and figure out what these two people wanted. Fitz, Simmons, I want you two in the server room putting the system back together. Skye, try and help them out. And Ward; what can you tell me about that phone call?" Coulson demanded. They'd all been there was Ward received the strange call, and it had turned Coulson's stomach to see what happened to Ward's former C.O.

Ward raised an eyebrow and folded his arms, obviously stressed about the situation. "Garrett was like a father to me. He took me in and made me the S.H.I.E.L.D. agent I am today. Why anyone would want to kill him is beyond me." Ward answered carefully.

"Really? What about the Hydra reference? Garrett practically admitted to being a member of an organization that died sixty five years ago!" Coulson still had a hard time believing it. The word 'Hydra' had sent a chill down his spine; could there really have been sleeper agents inside S.H.I.E.L.D.?

"Garrett was under pressure, saying what he needed to buy time." Ward defended.

"But he volunteered the word 'Hydra', didn't he?" Skye demanded, moving to stand beside him.

"We don't know what happened before that call was made." Ward argued.

"What about that last part?" Coulson played the recording of the call again.

"It's over, Ward. No more Hydra, no more mission, no more loyalty. You want this life so bad? Keep it. Screw it up, and we will come."

The sound was eerie, and both Fitz and Simmons shuddered.

"He said it like he was telling _you_ that Hydra is gone." Coulson said slowly. His suspicion was growing, and the day was only getting weirder. Ward stared him in the eye and spoke firmly.

"I am not Hydra. I don't know what this man meant, but he is obviously unhinged. Why else would he kill dozens of S.H.I.E.L.D. agents?"

"And what did he mean by 'screw it up and we will come'?" Skye asked. "That's like super-villain creepy right there."

"Coulson! We've got company!" May angrily yelled the warning, and they all froze.

The massive 'bus' had landed just outside the Triskelion, and it had been child's play to get into the airfield. Aria had handled the guards, as there was only one red-target to be found. Liam disposed of him quickly, and they moved towards the aircraft as it landed.

The big bay door on the back could only be opened from the outside, so they waited for it to do just that. They'd been careful; none of

the guards had made any radio calls. The door should have slowly dropped open, and Coulson's team would have been there with Lola on the ramp.

"This is exciting!" Aria squealed.

"He's a monster."

"I know, butâ€¦"

"He tortured our mother."

"That wasn't technically his faultâ€¦" Aria said, a little more soberly.

"He's half the reason we're here." Liam said coldly.

"Fine. I'm not excited any more. Happy?"

"Rarely. This door isn't opening." Liam noticed.

"Should we knock?" Aria wondered, tapping the sloping metal.

"Yep. Stand back." Liam rolled his shoulders and braced his feet against the asphalt.

"Poor Lolaâ€¦"

* * *

><p>"What do you mean we have company?" Coulson asked as May ran out from the cockpit.<p>

"Two hostiles outside the bay door!" May shouted. She whipped out her gun and they all followed here down the spiral staircase, into the lower portion of the plane. Fitz and Simmons were the last ones down, while Ward and May took the lead.

Ward especially was unnerved; how had these people known? Why had they killed Garrett soâ€¦ symbolically? And why on earth were they trying to board the bus now?

They all hit the deck of the plane and drew their weapons, waiting for the inevitable. The plane shook as a massive shockwave hit it, and a stream of daylight breached the lower door.

"Hold your fire!" May shouted, gripping her gun tighter. Skye, Coulson, May and Ward were all standing in a line, guns raised and fingers poised. Another shockwave hit and they were almost knocked to the ground.

"Will that door hold?" Coulson demanded. Fitz and Simmons both leaned against the glass wall of the lab, looking terrified.

"I have no idea! Those are enhanced, they could do any number of things that door wasn't meant to withstand!" Fitz yelled.

Another 'boom' echoed through the plane, and more daylight streamed in. In another second, the door was ripped open wide enough to expose a large, masculine figure standing in the light.

All four of them opened fire at once, and forty rounds flew towards Liam. He calmly took them, absorbing the kinetic energy into his system. As soon as the guns clicked on empty, Liam stepped up into the plane, and Aria peeked out from around the bent cargo bay door.

"Who are you? What do you want?" Coulson demanded, staring in disbelief at the man in front of him.

"The name's Aria; and I want _him_. Minus the psycho-villain mentality and possibly tied up." Aria said as she entered the plane.

"Drop your weapons, all of you." Liam ordered. They all looked to Coulson, who nodded yes. May and Ward very slowly and hesitantly lowered their guns to the floor, while Skye refused.

"No way! This thing killed dozens of S.H.I.E.L.D. agents!" She furiously tried to reload, and Liam stepped towards her.

"Give me the gun, ma'am." Liam said reverently. Skye jammed the clip into the bottom of the gun, and he deftly jerked the now loaded weapon out of her grip.

"I am a person, not a thing. I haven't killed any S.H.I.E.L.D. agents yet. Keyword, yet." Liam growled. He turned to Aria and nodded to the stairs. "I can handle them; get this thing airborne."

Aria gave one last longing look at Ward before running up the stairs towards the cockpit.

"Up the stairs. All of you." Liam ordered. When no one moved, he pulled out his one weapon for the first time.

"This is a highly advanced weapon designed by the foremost experts on weapons technology. If I shoot someone with this, they'll wake up tomorrow wishing they were dead. Move!" Liam shouted. Again, they looked to Coulson, who nodded an affirmative.

In minutes the entire team was tied up, some more so than others, and the plane shot into the blue sky again. The doors to the cargo bay were sealed to keep the air in, Aria dipped the wings in salute to the Triskelion as they passed.

* * *

><p>"How long until the singularity opens again?" Aria called from the cockpit.<p>

"Fifty seven minutes. Hurry." Liam called back. He didn't turn to face the doorway, he kept his steely gaze on the hostages in front of him.

They were all in the upper section of the plane, near the conference room. Everyone but Aria and Liam was sitting on the floor. May was actually on her stomach, handcuffed, tied up, gagged, and with a small table resting on her back. Liam had taken no chances.

"What do you want? What is all of this about?" Coulson tried again.

Liam had his weapon trained on Ward, eyeing him furiously.

"Shut up."

"Or what? You'll kill me? I think if you were going to you would have already!" Coulson pointed out, scooting around on the carpet. He got into a more comfortable position and kept talking.

"Are you two hunting Hydra? Is that it? You think you've found some kind of a conspiracy and you're going to-"

"Shut up, now." Liam didn't move, and didn't take his eyes off of Ward.

"And what is this singularity you're flying us towards?" Coulson kept pressing, suspecting Liam wasn't going to hurt him.

"Shut up or I kill him." Liam threatened. He was still staring at Ward, who was now looking nervous.

Coulson pursed his lips and scooted back to where he'd been forced down. Skye was beside him, while Fitz and Simmons were next to her. Ward and May were on the end of the line, and all were staring up at Liam.

"What's your name?" Simmons was the one who spoke now, her voice shaky. "You can't tell us your mission; tell me your name, then."

Liam sighed and glanced over at her. There seemed to be some recognition on his part, and then a look of sympathy.

"Liam. Liam Hunter."

"Nice to meet you Liam. Mind explaining why you're threatening to kill us?" Fitz demanded, shifting around to be closer to Simmons.

"Yes. I do mind." Liam said simply.

"How about why you hate him so much?" Skye asked, glancing at Ward.

Liam's jaw clenched as his eyes grew even darker. "He's done things. Heâ€¦" He stopped and licked his lips, fighting with his conscious. "He killed my mother."

They were all silent for a moment, and Ward looked confused. His eyes went up as if he were trying to remember something, and then he shook his head. "I don't think soâ€¦"

"Shut up!" Liam shouted. Aria, in the cockpit, looked over her shoulder at the noise.

"You killed my mother. You killed her in front of my sister, and you left her body for me to find." Liam sneered. He gripped his weapon tighter, his finger dancing on the trigger.

"I definitely didn't do _that_. I don't know what you'reâ€¦" Liam moved closer to him suddenly, coming with an inch of Ward's

face.

"Speak again and I will remove your tongue. You are alive because my sister wants to see you saved. There is no other reason."

"Okay, so if he killed your mother, and that's your sister, what's the deal there?" Skye asked slowly, raising an eyebrow. Liam returned to his spot by the cockpit door and calmed down.

"It's complicated."

"No it's not! He's hot!" Aria called back.

Liam rolled his jaw around before speaking. "Correction; a man who looks, acts, and talks like you ruined our family. You, however, didn't. And won't."

"Oh, that explains _everything_!" Skye joked.

Liam actually laughed, despite his mood. He looked at Skye with a twinkle in his eye. "I was warned about that; but no one can do your sense of humor justice. It's good to see you again."

Skye looked disturbed, and Liam sensed he'd gone too far. They were all silent for a long time. Liam kept up his resolute stare, and Aria started humming an unfamiliar tune to herself.

Close to an hour later, Liam broke the tension. "Less than two minutes until the singularity opens. What's our E.T.A.?"

"We're here." Aria answered. "But wait… shouldn't there be preliminary spatial distortion?"

Liam swallowed hard before answering. "Yes, isn't there?"

"No…"

Liam raced to the cockpit and looked out the window beside his sister. They were high; too high for that plane. The engines were whining and the seals on the doors were starting to stretch. They were at fifty thousand feet; at the same spot they'd come from.

"One minute to breach; it'll be here." Liam said firmly.

"Could we have missed it?" Aria asked, looking around the sky hopefully.

"No, my watch was set to the microsecond. It'll be here." Liam told her.

"Hopefully soon, because the engines are starting to die on us. We won't be able to stay up much longer."

Liam punched the wall to his left and grit his teeth, staring out the glass at one point in the inky black sky.

"Liam, it's time." Aria looked at the watch that was beeping on Liam's wrist. "We're at the right coordinates, this is the right time, but the singularity isn't here!"

"It has to be! Look, just keep us up as long as you can! Vent the atmosphere from the lower decks through the main engines if you have to, but keep this plane up! It _has _to be here!"

"Venting atmosphere nowâ€¦" Aria cringed as the engines roared to life again, and a huge explosion rocked the plane.

"We just lost an engine!" Aria's fingers flew across the controls, trying to keep the plane level and stable. But it was no use; the plane was coming down. Fast.

"I have to bring her down before we crash and burn! I'm sorry!" Aria drove the control stick down, and the plane fell back to earth slowly. Liam stood behind her, watching as their ticket home faded away. He kept expecting to see it at the last second; for that monumental blast to light up the sky. Nothing happened. There was no explosion, no spatial distortion, no way home.

"I'm sorryâ€¦" A tear slipped out of Aria's eye as she looked up at her brother.

"It's my fault. I took you on this mission, it's my fault for not getting you home." Liam moaned. He tried to meet his sister's stare, his stomach knotting as the realization hit him.

"I volunteered, remember? Besides, we're alive." Aria wiped away the tear and tried to fake a smile. "We have each other. And if we do this right, Mom and Dad will be alive."

"Thirty years from now." Liam said softly.

"Thirty years from now." Aria repeated.

* * *

><p>Liam walked back into the conference room to find Fitz up and trying to free Ward. Liam angrily slammed him down to the floor again and trained his weapon on Ward.<p>

"Bad move." Without warning, Liam shot him in the chest. Ward slumped back against the wall, completely unconscious.

"And just for good measureâ€¦" Liam shot May next, despite the rest of the team screaming bloody murder.

"Stop!"

"Shoot me! It was my fault, shoot me!"

"What is wrong with you?"

"Shut up!" Liam shouted, drowning them all out. He returned his weapon to its holster and shook his head.

"Things have changed." Liam's voice was different; more heavy and burdened. "Weâ€¦ my sister and Iâ€¦ we aren't going home. We're staying here."

"What in blazes is that supposed to mean?" Fitz yelled, breathing

heavily and staring at Ward.

"You should know." Liam said with a half smile. "You're the one who planned all of this."

Again, there was silence. Liam considered his options; none of them were good. Aria was flying them to a safe-house that may or not exist yet, and they had some of the most dangerous S.H.I.E.L.D. agents to ever walk the earth held hostage. There weren't too many ways for the situation to end.

"I guess it doesn't matter now. If the singularity didn't open, that means that they couldn't open it on their end. Which means none of this matters." Liam gestured at the plane and let his hands fall to his sides.

"My name is Liam Hunter. My sister is Aria Hunter. We were born in the year two thousand and eighteen." Liam explained, realizing what he'd have to do.

"Wait… that's like five years from now; you look thirty!" Skye objected. They'd seen Ward and May breathing and started to calm down.

"Twenty seven, actually." Liam corrected. "My mother's name was Bobbi Morse. _Agent_ Bobbi Morse. She worked for S.H.I.E.L.D. My father's name is Lance Hunter. He's a freelance agent right about now; probably on the run from police somewhere. He's a gun for hire."

"You and your sister…" Coulson looked back and forth between the girl in the cockpit and the man in front of him, disbelief written on his face.

"Are from the future?" Simmons finished. Liam nodded.

"Yes. Yes we are. We came back in time thirty years to fix what went wrong. With S.H.I.E.L.D., with the Inhumans, with everything." Liam kept going, not leaving out any details.

"Agent Grant Ward is Hydra. Always has been. He trained under John Garrett, who is the biggest Hydra nut alive today. We're talking Red-Skull level Hydra. So I killed him. And then there's Alexander Pierce; the brains behind this whole Hydra scheme. I cut off his head. Brock Rumlow? He hunted us down, beat my father half to death, and tortured my sister. I made him melt. You see where I'm going with this?" Liam asked, a slightly crazed undertone in his voice.

"Hydra infiltrated your organization. In two weeks, it would have tried a hostile takeover. Thousands would have died. Captain America; Steve Rogers, the hero… He would have saved the day, destroyed three heli-carriers, and with the help of Natasha Romanoff stopped Hydra. For the moment. It gets crazy after that. So what was our brilliant idea?" Liam asked no one.

"Fitz and Simmons invented a time machine. After her trip through an alien monolith to another planet, it got her thinking. What if we used the same physics to travel not through space, but through time? Well, there were complications. First, we were working off of a sunken aircraft carrier, long story, with all of eight agents, longer

story, and had only a few days before an alien parasite controlling _his_ bodyâ€¦" He looked over at Ward accusingly, "Takes over the free world. The good old U.S.A.? It falls. Russia. China. Japan, Englandâ€¦ they all fall. Under one banner, the banner of Hydra, the world rises again. All of this happens in the next ten years. That's my childhood, folks!" Liam said with a fake smile.

"So there we were. Two inhumans, children of a dead agent and blessed with super-powers from an alien crystal and latent DNA, were selected for a mission. Go back in time and fix things. No problem. Except, I was going to have to survive a fusion bomb going off, in a low earth orbit. That sucked, let me tell you."

"Then I was going to have to survive a fifty thousand foot drop. That sucked worse. And I had to keep my sister safe, so we could finish the mission together. Which we did. But now, lo and behold, our way home is gone. Either that means we did the job really well, or not at all. And we're not going to know for thirty years. Sounds like fun, right?" Liam demanded. All of the pressure and stress of the past five years was melting away, showing off the crazier, more desperate side of Liam Hunter.

"I grew up looking at pictures of this plane. Being taught by Agent May. Director Coulson. Doctor's Fitz and Simmons. Commander Daisy Johnson. A.K.A., Skye." Liam looked her in the eye as he spoke; Skye looked shocked beyond words.

"She taught us how to use our powers. Aria can control pain and induce it in anyone around her. I can absorb kinetic energy and release it later. When we came through the mist Aria reduced anyone in a two block radius to utter agony. I could barely walk because the kinetic energy of taking a simple step was overloading me. But you helped us through that." Liam told her, looking respectfully down at Skye.

"And you don't remember any of it. Because it hasn't happened yet. Judging by the lack of a portal in the sky above us, it won't happen. We're now relics of a time that won't come to pass. 'Artifacts', we're called. Anomalies in the plan. So I have no problem telling you all of this; it probably won't happen at all. This is like a fairy tale for all of you!" Liam laughed.

"The great Doctor Leo Fitz! Explorer of worlds, husband of Jemma Simmons! Doctor Jemma Simmons! Mastermind and deadly tactician! You once let a monster loose in a castle on the chance that it would kill your enemies before it killed you. You were that ruthless." He told her, looking now at Simmons.

"Director Phil Coulson! Leader of the remnant of S.H.I.E.L.D.! You lost a hand, your car, your organization, and the woman you love! You're so mentally ruined by the war that you stay in a library for weeks at a time, writing books in a language no one can read. Tahiti; it's a magical place, isn't it?"

"Commander Daisy Johnson! Daughter of monsters, leader of Inhumans, general of the strangest army on Earth! You led other Inhumans like you and me into battle, and watched as they all died. You then trained me and my sister, hoping to finally have a success!"

"And let's not forget Ward! He killed _hundreds_ before that alien

took over his body. Then he graduated to millions. Millions, dead, because of him. He betrayed his family, his friends, and his whole _race_! In the name of vengeance, against you all! The family he always wanted!"

"And Mayâ€¦ distraught at losing her husband to the same gene that's in my DNA, she killed him and then herself during the war. She died at her own hands, unable to carry the burden of all the lives she took." Liam finished his story and leaned against the wall again.

"And I haven't even mentioned Mac! Or any of the other dozens of Agents you train and then lose. All in a future that will never come to pass. You want to know who we are, Director Coulson?" Liam asked, slipping back into the old habit.

"We're nightmares. We want to change everything that's supposed to be and we've succeeded. Insight will finish what we started. Why are we doing this? We have nothing left to do. No one left to kill. No missions left to fail."

Aria walked out of the cockpit, eyeing her brother nervously. "Can you handle another drop? We're at ten thousand over some thick tree cover."

"I can handle it. Let's get out of here." Liam took his sister by the hand and they both ran, but not before cutting Coulson loose.

The two strangers jumped from the plane, wind whipping at their faces as the bus flew overhead. They landed in a clearing, Liam absorbed the impact with the last of his strength. They both took off into the woods, away from the lives they'd shattered. Maybe for the better; maybe for the worst. They didn't know anymore, and neither did anyone else. They were the Relics, the Artifacts, the unseen players. The of here." Liam took his sister by the hand and they both ran, but not before cutting Coulson loose.

The two strangers jumped from the plane, wind whipping at their faces as the bus flew overhead. They landed in a clearing, Liam absorbed the impact with the last of his strength. They both took off into the woods, away from the lives they'd shattered. Maybe for the better; maybe for the worst. They didn't know anymore, and neither did anyone else. They were the Relics, the Artifacts, the unseen players. The Mockingbirds.

3. Chapter 3

DISCLAIMER: I do not now, nor have I ever, owned the characters and settings of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. I own only the characters I myself have created. Any views, opinions, or beliefs of these characters does not necessarily reflect the views, opinions or beliefs of myself.

* * *

><p>Director Fury walked calmly into the meeting room, addressing the holographic images with a nod. He hated these meetings; that was the whole reason Pierce had been given the job. The World Security Council; a group of men and women that had nothing better to do than

tell him how not to do his job.<p>

"Director Fury; do you have a status report?" A woman with a British accent asked in a neutral tone.

"Yes. Our status ranges between in pain and violated." Fury said harshly. Agent Hill, who was standing just outside the glass enclosed room, tried to hide a laugh.

"Do you have a _serious_ report?" A man demanded.

"Yes, councilmember, I do." Fury sighed and looked down at his boots before going on.

"We lost a lot of agents. And I mean a _lot_ of agents. Our first priority during the attack was to evacuate non-essential personnel, but it soon became apparent that these individuals weren't targeting civilians."

That caused some stir around the council. The assumption up to this point had been that the intruders were terrorists; but what kind of terrorist doesn't target civilians?

"Ninety nine percent of the victims were armed, dangerous, and quickly executed. Alexander Pierce is the exception." Fury swallowed hard. Pierce had been one of his oldest friends. His death had hit Fury hard. "He was beheaded by the man, who we now know is called Liam Hunter."

"We have intelligence on the intruders?" A French woman demanded, obviously curious. Fury nodded.

"Agent Coulson and his team wereâ€¦ debriefed, you could call it. Their story is almost unbelievable. If not for the physical evidence they produced, that is."

"Physical proof?"

"They knew the exact layout of this facility without ever having set foot inside. They scrambled our system and dumped terabytes of data onto the internet. There are only a few people alive who possess the ability to do these things, and two of them are standing in front of you." Fury nodded at Hill, who was of course listening in.

"Then there are their abilities. Our first guess was that they were enhanced; we've since learned that this is incorrect."

"What?" A Russian man raised an eyebrow and leaned towards the camera. "If they're not Enhanced, nor Asgardian, nor humanâ€¦?"

"That's exactly what they are. _In_human. Or so they claim. They claim a lot of thingsâ€¦" Fury shook his head, unsure of how much to tell the council.

"I'll give it to you straight, ladies and gentlemen of the council. These individuals claim to be time travelers. From thirty years in the future."

This caused a large stir among the council; there was cursing in

languages Fury didn't speak. One man in particular started laughing.

"Director Fury; your installation was comprised, your agents were slaughtered, and now you expect us to believe that these terrorists were _time travelers? _You have lost your hold on reality!"

"Believe me, councilmember, I wish it weren't reality. But when two strangers walk into _your_ home and expose _your_ dirty secrets for all the world to see, you can talk to me about reality!" Fury shouted. "I have seen things I did not want to see. Heard reports that should not have been given. The information we have at this time is that these two Inhumans were unable to return to wherever it is they call home. They're still here, somewhere. Which is why I have proposed that project Insight be rushed into operation."

There was murmuring between the men and women as they discussed the possibility.

"How long will it take to get Insight operational?" One woman asked.

"Twenty four hours. Our system was scrambled but-"

"We will inform you when we have made a decision." The British woman said quickly. Fury smiled.

"And I hope you remember my policy on your decisions."

The woman raised an eyebrow and sneered at him. "Our decisions will be followed, as long as they are not 'stupid-ass', is that correct?"

"It is. Have a nice day." Fury walked out of the room with the same determined look in his eye. Hill laughed and followed him as the holograms faded.

* * *

><p>"I just received word from Director Fury." Agent Coulson said calmly as he rejoined them all in the conference room. "A new project is set to go live in twenty four hours; with it, we'll be able to identify and eliminate the Hunter siblings."<p>

Fitz, Simmons, and Skye were shocked; 'elimination' wasn't the usual drill. But he wasn't finished.

"Our orders are to find and neutralize them before this new project is ready. Fury wants them alive, but we can't take any more chances."

"Twenty four hours?" Simmons asked, her jaw hanging open.

"Our assignments normally are urgent. Where do we start?" Skye asked. She was different since the attack; both furious and curious at the same time. Ward and May were still out of it downstairs, being monitored closely.

"At the spot they touched down. We're taking a Quin-jet to the area while this bus is repaired, but I'm keeping May and Ward onboard for

the time being." Coulson answered. He brought up a map of the woods they'd flown over on the table, and they all studied it carefully.

"Fitzsimmons, stay here and work on confirming the sibling's stories. I don't know how, but figure something out. Skye and I will join another agent from the Triskelion who will take us close to where they landed. Here." Coulson pointed to a spot with dense tree cover, a few miles away from the Canadian border.

"Another agent?" Skye asked inquiringly.

"Guy named Triplet. He'll be our pilot; he was there when agent Garrett wasâ€¦" He didn't finish, but he didn't have to. They had all seen, and heard, the scene.

"Alright; let's move out." Coulson killed the display, and they all dispersed.

* * *

><p>Fitz and Simmons were in their lab, waiting for an analysis to run as they talked. Both were shaken from the brief encounter, and both were desperate to learn anything they could about the two strangers.<p>

"I mean, it's technically possible, time travel, I mean; just so unlikely!" Fitz was saying, leaning against one of the counters.

"And yet we have the proof right in front of us! Finger prints, video evidence, even a hair sample! These two people, whoever they were, left a pretty convincing footprint." Simmons argued. She had her eye pressed to a microscope, lifting a hair she'd lifted from the pilot's chair in the cockpit. It was the same strawberry blonde shade as Aria Hunter's; easily distinguishable from May's.

"I still can't believe they were here, that they actually made it from wherever it is they came from!"

"According to the radar from this very plane; fifty thousand feet straight up!" Simmons reminded him. Fitz shook his head in wonder.

"He survived a fall like thatâ€¦ carrying his sister, no lessâ€¦"

"The DNA tests are done." Simmons said with a smile, anxiously bringing up the results on a monitor. Fitz leaned over her shoulder to get a better look at them.

"Okayâ€¦ that's interestingâ€¦" Fitz said slowly.

"It's their DNAâ€¦ that's the source of their powers! They're not enhanced, they really are another species!" Simmons stared in awe at the data, reading and rereading the analysis.

"Okay, but what about the time-traveling part? That bloke said his mother was an agent, right?" Fitz was already moving, going to their holo-table and bringing up S.H.I.E.L.D.'s database.

"I'm comparing the sample nowâ€¦ shouldn't take long to-" he jumped a little as the match came up. "Got it!"

Simmons walked over to stand beside him and they both stared at the face displayed at eye level.

"Agent Bobbi Morse; currently assigned on an aircraft carrier in the middle of bloody no where." Fitz read.

"She's only what, thirty? There's no way this could be her daughter unless-"

"Time travel. There's our proof. Look, she's got no immediate family, no listed children, it's just her! She was even married to a man named Lance Hunter a few years ago!" Fitz read, pointing it out to Simmons proudly.

"Wait, this is her personal file, we shouldn't be in hereâ€¦"

"We're on orders from Fury. We can do whatever we want." Fitz said calmly. Simmons looked surprised and then mischievous.

"Ah yes, we _are_, aren't we?"

"Yes! Now let's see what else we can dig up on these peopleâ€¦" Fitz started scrolling through the files, looking for information Hunter.

"Agent Morse is kind ofâ€¦" Fitz said under his breath.

"Scary? She's got a half dozen forms of martial arts listed here-"

"I was going to say hot, butâ€¦"

"Fitz!" Simmons slapped his shoulder playfully. "You fancy her, don't you? She's going to give birth to super-powered assassins from the future and you fancy her!"

"I do not! I just said she was attractive, that's allâ€¦"

"You used the word 'hot' actually."

"Let's just find this guy alreadyâ€¦"

They worked for another hour, studying and practically stalking the two parents of the Hunter siblings. Nothing useful came up to confirm or deny their stories of the future, though.

"I'm worried about Ward and May; they've been out of it for a whileâ€¦" Fitz said again, with a concerned edge to his voice.

"I drew a sample of each of their blood; there's some kind of toxin in their systems I can't identify." Simmons brought up the results of their scans on the table; by all indications, they were just sleeping.

"Can we inject some kind of scrubbing agent into them to wake them up?" Fitz asked as he read the data. Simmons shook her head.

"Even if I could devise a way to manufacture something like that, it might just make them more unstable. At this point, the toxin is naturally being filtered out of their systems. It looks like Liam was right; they'll wake up sometime tomorrow with a bad headache. If I try to change the state of equilibrium right nowâ€¦"

"They might not wake up at all." Fitz finished.

"Right. They're stable for now; if we try and wake them up, it could be a disaster. We'll just have to wait for the toxin to do it's work." Simmons said mournfully.

"But that's a good thing, right?" Fitz asked. "If this Liam wanted them dead, he could have killed them easily. He went out of his way to make sure they lived."

"Yes, after killing dozens of agents in the Triskelion!" Simmons countered.

Fitz turned to face her, looking like he was on the verge of a breakthrough. "But that's just it! He'd already killed so many peopleâ€¦ why stop here?"

"To make sure the future turned out the way they wantedâ€¦"

"Time travel."

* * *

><p>"Time travel? Really?" Agent Triplet was flying the Quin-jet with one hand, and looking over his shoulder to talk Coulson at the same time. They were only a few minutes out from the spot now, and Coulson had been filling them in.<p>

"That's our best guess. Well, that's what they told us, anyway. And it sort of makes senseâ€¦" Skye answered, loading her weapon as she spoke. She was wearing tactical gear and the bullet-proof vest looked out of place on her.

"I don't know what those things are. But they way they dismantled my C.Oâ€¦" Triplet shook his head and made preparations to land.

"They need to be put down."

"I wanted to ask you about that." Coulson said gently, trying to figure out how to word his question. "Did Garrett seemâ€¦ different, lately? Had he gone through any changes?"

"If you're asking if I think he was Hydra, then no. Garrett was a good man. There's no way he was anything but." Trip set the plane down and turned off the engines, taking off his headset as he did.

"Fair enough. Let's find these two." Coulson lowered the ramp behind them, and the three set out into the darkened woods beyond.

"We couldn't wait until morning to do this?" Skye asked as they looked out into the pitch black tree line.

"What's the matter? Don't like the dark?" Trip asked as he took out his side arm.

"Not when there's 'Inhumans' hiding in it!"

* * *

><p>Liam was tired. His powers had limits, and he'd reached them. The fall from low-earth orbit nearly killed him. The prolonged fighting at the Triskelion didn't help, and the latest jump from the bus had nearly done him in.<p>

Aria was doing her best to keep him alive and their spirits up, but neither one had any clue how to do that. Home had sucked. It had been hard, rough, and miserable. But it was home. Now they were cut off from it completely.

"Hey, I brought some soup and a few blankets." Aria said cheerfully, kneeling down beside her brother. They had made a small camp in the woods, and Liam had almost immediately fallen asleep.

He woke up with a jerk and looked around before seeing Aria. "Please tell me you didn't steal this."

"I left like a hundred dollars of VonStrucker's money on the counter; I think whoever owns the cabin will be okay!" Aria laughed. "Will you?" She asked more seriously.

"I'll be fine, Aria. I practiced this, remember?" Liam said, peeling the top off of the soup can.

"No. You practiced jumping off of buildings holding cartons of eggs. There's a difference." Aria built up the fire a little more and put the can next to it, hoping to heat it up slightly. The blanket she wrapped around her brother, trying to keep him warm.

"Give or take a few thousand feet and a few hundred pounds, it was just the same!" Liam joked.

"I'm just worried aboutâ€¦hey!" She stopped mid-sentence and whirled on him. "A 'few' hundred pounds? Few means three to four! I am not four hundred pounds!"

"I know, I'm messing with you!" Liam moaned, leaning back against the tree. "I'll be fine. A few more hours of sleep and a few days without catching any bullets in my teeth and I'll be good."

"I hope so. If I lose you, I'm done. I mean, I'll go off my rocker." Aria threatened. "I'll rob banks, insult fat people, kidnap good looking men and make them fight to the death in their underwearâ€¦ it'll be chaos."

"Yes, I know. I was there on your twentieth birthday." Liam said darkly. Aria laughed.

"Oh come on! I only demolished like two buildings!"

They both stopped as they heard a twig snap in the distance. Aria's head snapped around, and Liam sat up again.

"Who's there?"

There was no response to her question. Another twig snapped.

"I said who's there?" Aria yelled it this time, and Liam put a hand on her leg.

"Not so loud!"

"Who's-" She stopped as the intruder revealed himself. A giant, brown, shaggy bear stood up on its hind legs to stare at them.

Liam breathed a sigh of relief, and Aria started laughing.

"Oh, aren't you cute! Well go on, don't let us disturb you!" She waved a hand, and sent a wave of pain through his nose. He sneezed and took off, growling the whole way. Aria sat down again and laughed softly.

"I haven't seen a bear in years."

"I know." Liam sank back down to the ground and let out a long breath.

"Why didn't that portal open?" Aria suddenly asked. She played with a few twigs by the fire and let her hair fall out of its bun.

"I've been wondering the same thing. I've got a few theories. None of them are pretty."

"Tell me anyway." Aria insisted.

"Okay. The first one is that back home, Hydra took the carrier. The portal didn't open because there was no one _to_ open it. We're stuck here and back home, they're all gone."

"Next." Aria said quickly.

"Or… We did it. We succeeded. Hydra doesn't rise, S.H.I.E.L.D. doesn't fall, that alien parasite doesn't inhabit evil-Ward and take over the world. The portal didn't open, because in this timeline, we're born, raised, and grow up without ever thinking of going back in time. We're not sent, so there is no portal."

"But wait, if that happens, then we don't go back here, we don't change the past, and the future turns out exactly the same, so we end up going back in time…" Aria trailed off, shaking her head as she tried to force it all to make sense.

"Time travel is weird that way. The fact that we're still here and home isn't here is probably a good sign. That means that we definitely changed something in the future. But for us…" Liam let it hang in the air, and Aria finished for him.

"We're useless. We shouldn't exist here, or anywhere. Even if we could go home, we'd be as out of place there as here."

Liam nodded and pursed his lips. "I think we need to stop thinking about right and wrong. About changing timelines and keeping things the same, or different, or whatever our mission was. Maybe we should

just think about what we want to do."

"Besides eat cheeseburgers?" Aria said with a smile.

"Yes."

"And besides hit on cute guys?"

"Definitely."

"I want to see mom." Aria kept up her smile, but her eyes suddenly turned sad. "The last time I saw herâ€¦ she was broken. She was dead, and dad was carrying her away. I want to see her when she was alive and healthy and strong and beautifulâ€¦" Aria was crying now, and Liam leaned over to hug her.

"So do I. We'll find her."

"How? We're stuck in the middle of the woods and we don't know where she is!" Aria laughed.

But before Liam could answer, they heard the tell-tale sound of a Quin-jet landing nearby, and moments later, Skye's voice.

"I have an idea." Liam grinned.

* * *

><p>"We've got nothing on thermal, no tracks, no sign of anything butâ€¦"<p>

"Anything but a camp site and a still-dying fire?" Coulson asked, cutting off Skye's complaint.

They'd stumbled into the siblings camp; Coulson had been in the lead and almost fell into the embers. Trip and Skye were close behind and stopped as they saw it.

"They were here!" Trip leveled his gun again and spun on his heel, searching the surrounding woods carefully.

"They didn't even eat their soup; they must have heard us coming!" Skye noted, kicking at the still warm can. They all froze when they heard a sound coming from the clearing. A Quin-jet was taking off; _their_ Quin-jet, to be precise.

"Oh, no no no no!" Skye took off towards the clearing with the other two right behind her, sprinting at top speed towards the sound.

They arrived just as the jet cleared the trees above them and flew off, it's engines sending down a warm draft to the observers below. Trip and Skye looked furious, while Coulson smiled and shook his head. "They're good. No doubt about it."

* * *

><p>"I wish I could have seen the look on Commander Johnson's face when she saw us taking off!" Aria laughed, enjoying the feeling of being in the cockpit again. Liam sat beside her, holding a computer tablet he'd found in the back.<p>

"It's Skye at this point, remember?"

"Oh yeah. That'll take some getting used to." Aria brought them up to twenty thousand feet and engaged their cloak before turning to her brother again.

"Find anything useful yet? Like say, a picture of Skye in a bikini?"

Liam sighed and shook his head, still studying the tablet. "Contrary to popular belief, I do not have a thing for every attractive girl we meet."

"You do like _girls,_ don't you?" Aria asked, half serious. Liam snorted and shot her a death look.

"Yes, Aria, I like girls. I do not like, however, the girl that grows up to be the woman that beat me into submission on a regular basis."

"Oh come on! She's so cute and innocent and fun loving at this point; and you've got that macho, dark hero thing going on! Plus you know so much about her from getting all of those lecturesâ€¦ you'd be perfect together!" Aria kicked her feet up onto the dashboard, intertwining her fingers to demonstrate her point.

"Pass." Liam said dryly.

"So how are we supposed to find mom anyway? Isn't she on some secret mission at this point?" Aria asked sincerely.

"That's what I'm looking for now. It says she's stationed on a carrier out to sea, but I can't find any information where it is."

"You think Fury wanted them hidden?"

"Considering there's a portal to another planet in its cargo hold? Yeah, I'd say that's a good bet. But no ship of that size is invisible. If I remember correctly, there should be a lot of high ranking S.H.I.E.L.D. officers on that ship. After our little party at the Triskelion, there's got to be some kind of communicationâ€¦" Liam concentrated on the data he was being fed, and tapped a spot in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

"Got it! Lock in these coordinates; that's where the last transmission came from." Liam said excitedly.

"On it. Here we come, mom!"

They flew for hours, neither one saying much in their nervous anticipation. Their mother had died when Liam was five and Aria was four; they were both on edge about finally meeting her again. So excited, in fact, that they overlooked important details.

As they approached the carrier, they ignored the hails. They were in a S.H.I.E.L.D. jet; they expected a red carpet to be rolled out. Instead, there was no one to be seen on deck. Aria landed the small craft on the tarmac while Liam opened the rear ramp, and they both

walked out into the moonlight together.

A slight ocean breeze ruffled her hair as Aria walked, and Liam
couldn't help but stare at her. She was happy and excited; it was so
rare that he wanted to remember the moment.

"Where is everyone? Do you think they're-" Aria stopped suddenly and
Liam's jaw dropped open. A hole appeared in her chest, just below her
collar bone. Blood gushed out of it as her hands flew up to cover the
wound.

Liam screamed. He shouted. He dropped to the ground with her and
tried to hold her in his arms, blood running down her chest. Tears
streamed out of his eyes as he babbled on, trying to get to her to
respond. He didn't remember what he said, and he didn't remember the
sniper and his team surrounding him. The last thing he remembered
before the butt of the gun impacted his head was that image of Aria,
bleeding out on his lap.

    4. Chapter 4

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beliefs of myself.**

* * *

><p>It took an hour to get another Quin-jet out to Coulson's team,
and by the time they got back to their hangar and their bus, Coulson
had lost his forgiving attitude. He brushed past security and walked
angrily up the flight of stairs, heading for the conference room.
Fitz and Simmons saw the look on his face and followed behind him as
Skye and Trip struggled to keep up.<p>

"What happened? We expected you back hours ago!" Simmons asked,
getting out of the way as Skye and Trip ran past.

"They stole our jet. I want satellite, radar, anything you can get
pointed at that ocean. They were heading east when we last saw them;
they must be headed for the open water." Coulson explained. He walked
up to the large table and turned on the screen as a call came in on
the monitor above him.

A Hispanic man in his late sixties appeared in front of them. He had
a white mustache and similarly colored hair, as well as old scars on
his cheeks. He looked tired and annoyed as he addressed
Coulson.

"Agent Coulson; I understand your team has been tracking the two
individuals from the Triskelion attack?"

"Agent Gonzales; it's a pleasure to meet you. I wish it were under
better circumstances." Coulson said quickly, flustered at the sight
of the other agent. He'd read about Gonzales, but never actually
spoken to him.

"Agreed. My team has captured the two intruders and we're holding

them on my ship, the Iliad, now."

"That'sâ€¦ that's great! I'll get my plane in the air and we can take them off your hands!" Coulson grinned.

"Don't bother. We're sending them back to the Triskelion shortly for questioning. One of them is injured; we're treating her now." Gonzales looked uncomfortable as he mentioned it.

"If you don't mind me asking, how did you find them?" Coulson asked, cocking his head slightly.

"We didn't. They found us. They're in custody now. Gonzales out."

The feed died suddenly, and Skye stepped forward.

"We're not waiting for them to show up, are we?"

"No we are not." Coulson turned to Triplet with a half smile. "Feel like flying a bus?"

* * *

><p>Gonzales turned from the large screen on the bridge of his ship, still going over the incident in his head. In the Triskelion, they'd slaughtered dozens of men and women seemingly without reason. Now, the man looked broken while the woman clung to life. He was expecting hardened killers; not normal people.<p>

"Have their jet inspected, double checked for sabotage, and prepare to load the prisoners on it as soon as possible." Gonzales ordered. He started to walk away, but stopped short when he heard something. He turned around to see the barrel of a gun pointed at his chest.

"Sorry, captain. But I can't do that."

* * *

><p>Liam sat in his cell, his head in his hands. He'd been left alone, in the dark, for half an hour now. He didn't know of Aria was alive or dead. He'd let her down. He'd let her get hurt.<p>

He pounded his fist against the wall, shaking with rage. He'd had one job; protect Aria. And he'd failed. She'd been shot and probably killed. He could have taken the bullet without a problem, if he'd only been standing a foot to the left.

His mother had died in his arms. She'd bled out after a knife-blade punctured her lung. He'd held her head up, trying to help her breathe. He'd been five years old, and he had to watch his mother die. Aria had been at preschool; he'd stayed home sick. It was the day that their world ended; the day the first Inhuman that ever lived had taken over Earth.

He'd held her head in his hands, sobbing as she faded. She'd talked to him, tried to keep him from losing it. In the end, she made him promise to watch after his sister. To keep Aria safe. She said that was his mission; that was what he needed to do. He'd always been a

rebellious child before that; his mother had to convince him that
simple things like brushing his teeth or doing his chores was
'mission-critical'. He'd wanted to a S.H.I.E.L.D. agent, just like
his parents. With her last breath, his mother had told given him his
first mission. Keep Aria safe. And he'd failed.

Liam almost didn't hear the gunshots echoing down the hallways. When
the screaming started, he barely cared. But when the door flew open
and a man ran inside, he was jerked back to reality.

"Uncle Mac?" Liam spoke out of habit, and quickly corrected himself.
"Agent Mackenzie?"

"I have no clue who you are or what you want, but I heard you can
kill people. You feel like killing Hydra?" The large man demanded,
holding the keys to Liam's cell in his hand.

"Let me out and I'll wipe them off of this ship." Liam swore. He
stood up and grabbed the bars in his hands, staring at Mac
pleadingly.

Mac narrowed his eyes, weighing his options. When another gunshot
ricocheted off the wall above him, he made his decision. He jammed
the key into the lock, jerked the door open, and turned to see three
of his former crewmates walk into the room.

They had tactical gear on and were holding automatic rifles; they'd
already taken out too many of his friends. But they didn't see Liam
until it was too late; he came out of the shadows like a wild
animal.

One Hydra soldier was slammed against the wall and shoved to the
ground, a flurry of blows breaking limbs left and right. Liam was out
of juice; his fists only had their own momentum behind them. But it
was enough.

The second guard made the mistake of dropping his rifle in favor of a
knife; Liam twisted his wrist out of the socket, punched his throat,
and slammed him against the wall with the first one. He sank to the
floor in a heap, while Liam moved to the third. A shot was fired, and
Liam absorbed the bullet's force with some effort. A second later,
severed fingers hit the deck as Liam cut through the man. Blood
splattered the wall as Liam drove the knife into him again and again,
until Mac had to physically pull him off the Hydra agent.

"Whoa, whoa! He's down!" Mac boomed, shaking the smaller man. Liam
had a dangerous light in his eye as he pocketed the knife.

"Where is my sister?"

"Crazy chick with the hole in her chest? Sickbay, where else?" Mac
snapped.

"Take me to her." Liam started looting the gear and weapons of the
fallen men while Mac stared in shock.

"There's got to be a hundred Hydra agents between us and
them!"

"What about my mother?"

"Who?"

"What about Bobbi Morse?" Liam shouted. More gunshots were heard, and boots stomped down the corridor.

"You know Bobbi?" Mac looked confused as he grabbed a rifle and more Hydra came into sight.

Liam had powers, and those powers were deadly. But he'd also been trained by Agents May, Coulson, Mac, Johnsonâ€¦ the list went on. He'd grown up in the kind of life most people avoided. So he knew how to kill; powers or no powers.

He fired short, steady bursts at the oncoming men, cutting them down easily. One man took a round to the knee, then the hand, then the neck. He went down, and another stepped over him. Liam shot his ankles out from under him before putting a round into his left eye. A third came running, and then a fourth.

When the bodies stopped falling and the rifles fell silent, Liam started counting.

"Eight. That's ninety two."

"What are you talking about?"

"You said there were a hundred Hydra agents between us and my sister. That's eight; that means there's only ninety two left. I've got five rounds left in this thing and there's more ammo on them. I think we've got a good shot at this." Liam said coldly. Mac stared and stared, trying to comprehend the man in front of him.

"Man, what are you?"

"I'm complicated. Let's go."

* * *

><p>Agent Morse was having a bad day. She'd always felt like being assigned to the carrier was punishment duty; she'd gotten wrapped up in a mission, she'd married a former suspect, she'd gotten a nasty divorce and ruined her credibility. So when her whole team was assigned to protect classified cargo on a ship in the middle of no where, she'd assumed there was a connection.<p>

She was a combat specialist; there wasn't a whole lot of combat on a S.H.I.E.L.D. vessel in the middle of the ocean. She'd been training, sparring with the braver crewmates, and trying not to go crazy. And then, lo and behold, when there finally is a chance at action, she's left out. A sniper took out the strangers that had sacked the Triskelion. She'd been furious at the loss of an opportunity like that.

But things were about to get better. She heard shooting and jumped up from her bunk, instantly awake. Screams came next, and orders were shouted that amounted to 'run away'. She kicked herself for not having a weapon on her; she was dressed only in a tee shirt and shorts. Not exactly combat gear.

Before she could make a move, the door burst open. Two men ran in, guns drawn and trained on her. She immediately put her hands in the air, a plan already forming. One of the men looked down at the cartoons on her shirt.

"Nice Smurfs."

"Thanks." With a wry smile, she jerked the man's gun forward and kicked him in the chin before ducking under the arm to slip behind the men. She twisted the arm back behind him, elbowed the other man in the face, and spun back around to kick the other man in the head. With a wrenching twist, she dislocated the first man's arm and grabbed the second man's helmet, bringing his face down and her knee up at the same time.

Without the armor padding, the skin on her knee split open as the nose and teeth broke. She shoved him back and punched him in the throat before grabbing his chin in her hands. With a quick twist, she snapped his neck and turned to the first man.

"Still like my Smurfs?" With that, she kicked him into unconsciousness.

* * *

><p>Mac and Liam made their way through the corridors, finding more and more dead bodies as they went. They were headed for the armory, despite Mac's insistence otherwise.<p>

"We already have guns! That's exactly where Hydra is expecting us!" Mac argued again.

"I know." Liam said curtly, as if it were obvious.

"Then why are we still going towards it?"

"Because I feel like killing someone and I want my stuff back." Liam snapped. The sickbay was on the way to armory, from where they were coming from, so he definitely wasn't taking any other route.

"Man, you are one giant load of crazy, you know that?"

As if to prove his point, Liam walked around the corner and spotted two men coming in the opposite direction. Without hesitation, Liam raised his arm.

"Hail Hydra!"

The men nodded and saluted back, so Liam raised his rifle and shot them both. Mac came around the corner a second later, eyes wide.

"What the heck was that?"

"A test. They failed. Let's go." Liam snatched ammo from the fallen Hydra agents and kept walking.

As they passed a red box sunken into the wall, Liam punched into and grabbed the axe inside. He kept walking and tucked the axe into his belt. "I need this."

Mac didn't say a word, and tried to keep up. They passed a broken light fixture, and there was still a toolbox left on the ground from the mechanic who was fixing it. Liam reached down and snatched a roll of tape from the top. "I need this too."

Finally the found the armory door, and Liam jerked it open. Three people were inside, eagerly loading up on ammo and weapons.

"Hail Hydra!" Liam said, standing in the doorway. Mac watched in horror as Liam was shot a dozen times. But Liam only grunted and nodded.

"You passed. We're with S.H.I.E.L.D."

Mac came around the open door and looked inside to see agent Hartley and two others standing inside, staring at Liam as if he were a ghost.

"Mac? What is this guy?" Hartley demanded, still aiming at Liam.

"He'sâ€¦ a little different. Hydra's trying to take over the ship; we're killing any we find." Mac explained, grabbing a shotgun off of a rack.

"Same here. You sure he's on our side?" Hartley asked, eyeing Liam suspiciously. He was busy going through the weapons and armor the S.H.I.E.L.D. agents had confiscated.

He put a small black pearl in his ear, slipped on a thick shirt with armor plating built into it, and shoved his hands into silver lined gloves. His Icer he slipped into the holster before grabbing his sister's stuff and throwing it into a sack.

"I am trying to do three things." Liam said, holding up as many fingers. "One: find my sister, who was last seen in the sickbay. Two: find my mother. Agent Bobbi Morse. Don't ask questions, I don't have the patience to answer them. Three: kill every Hydra agent on this ship as painfully as possible. If you can help with any of these, grab a gun and follow me."

Hartley looked at Mac, who only shrugged and finished loading his gun. "I don't know any more than you do."

"Alright, let's see what this kid's got!" Hartley said savagely.

"One more thing. I need your shotgun."

* * *

><p>The sickbay was small; no larger than the conference room aboard the bus. There was a smaller room partitioned off in the back, with glass walls around it. It was there that Aria was lying, hooked up to life support and being monitored carefully by the doctors.<p>

Again, gunshots rang out. The head doctor licked his lips nervously and stood by the door, thinking he'd defend the rest of his staff if necessary. More gunshots, and closer. This time there was a shotgun

involved, he was sure.

There was a loud thump, and the door burst open suddenly. The doctor flinched instinctively, but instead of Hydra soldiers pouring in, a dozen other scared S.H.I.E.L.D. agents ran inside followed by two strangers.

One was dressed in strange black armor with futuristic sunglasses covering his eyes; the other was holding a shotgun with a fire axe taped to the barrel.

"I got to admit, this thing's pretty cool!" Mac grinned, admiring the weapon as he reloaded it. There was blood on the blade.

"It's called a Shax. Keep it handy." Liam brushed past the doctor to look at his sister, ignoring the other people in the room. Aria was still breathing, but she looked pale. Liam brushed aside a strand of her hair gently before rejoining the others.

"Where's Hartley?" Mac asked suddenly, turning back to the door.

"Right here!" She walked in a second later, holding a small radio in her hand. "Spotted this on one of the last guys."

Without warning, Liam snatched it out of her hands. "The agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. loyal to Nick Fury are gathering in the sickbay. We are waiting." Liam clicked the radio off and tossed it back to Hartley, who looked ready to shoot him again.

"What are you doing?"

"Bringing our problems straight to us. Any S.H.I.E.L.D. left on the boat will come straight here." Liam explained.

"So will everyone else!" Mac yelled.

"Counting on it."

The door burst open yet again, and they all turned to face the newcomer. Standing in the doorway, dressed in armor and holding a handgun, was agent Bobbi Morse. She'd found her uniform, grabbed a weapon, and judging by the blood stains, busily killed Hydra before arriving there.

"Momâ€¦" Liam stuttered quietly. Morse walked right past him to talk to Mac, who looked relieved to see her.

"What on earth was that? You just broadcast your position to everyone onboard!" Morse shouted angrily.

"No, he did." Mac pointed to Liam, who was still just staring at her. His expression was totally blank, and no words came to him. She was beautiful; strong, healthy, and dressed like the warrior she was. A far cry from the last time he'd seen her.

"What did you call me?" Morse asked, focusing her attention on the strange man.

Liam cleared his throat and found his voice. "Agent Bobbi Morse.

It'sâ€¦ it's been a while."

"I don't know you." Morse raised an eyebrow and reached for her gun again before Mac stepped in.

"Long story short, he's a super-powered time traveler, and that's his sister. In the future, you're his mom. He hates Hydra and he's pretty much un-killable. The rest I didn't really pay attention to."

Liam laughed a little at Mac's description. Morse still stared at her apparent son, trying to process what Mac had said. When she found her own voice, she sounded a little unsure of herself.

"You look like a man I used to know."

"Lance Hunter. My father." Liam answered.

"Guys, we got company!" Mac shouted, raising his Shax to his shoulder. Turning on his heel, Liam raised his own shotgun and fired twice, felling both incoming agents.

"I watched you die once. It won't happen again." Liam said solemnly.

Morse, Hartley, Mac, and Liam all stood in a line, facing the door. Innocent S.H.I.E.L.D. agents cowered behind them, anxious to find cover. Beside them, Aria and the doctors around her waited behind the glass walls for the fighting to end.

Six more agents came running down the hallway, guns raised. Liam stood in front of his new friends as the bullets flew, absorbing each one effortlessly.

He stomped his foot on the deck, throwing the transferred energy into the metal. It launched him up, towards the high ceiling and over the head of the first Hydra agent that came in. He fired his shotgun straight into the top of the man's head, killing him instantly.

Liam landed on his knees, looking down the corridor at the next target. He slid the gun into the holster on his back and ran forward, a feral yell escaping his throat. The first Hydra took a thundering punch to his gut, knocking him into the ceiling. As he came down, Liam spun around and delivered another blow to the top of his helmet, sending him shooting backwards at chest height, his dead weight knocking over another two men.

A grenade was thrown at his head; Liam caught it in his gloves, waited for the explosion, and rolled his shoulders as light and sound escaped the fingers of his hand. Another Hydra soldier was killed just from the heat of the blast as Liam extended his hand outward, throwing the energy in front of him.

Liam kept walking forward, walking through the terrified men. Literally walking _through_ them. Ribcages were ripped apart, arms were jerked free from their torsos, heads were snapped around at unnatural angles.

When it was done, Liam calmly walked back into the room full of people, soaked in blood and breathing heavily.

"Who… who did you say you were?" Morse stuttered, staring wide eyed at her son.

"Liam Hunter. Your son." Liam smiled at her softly, and minus the blood and gore around him, it would have looked nice. Sweet, like a boy greeting his mom as she came home from work. As it was, he looked terrifying.

It took an hour from everyone to show up. Most of the Hydra agents had come to the sickbay expecting a fight; they found a slaughter house. Between Mac and his Shax, Morse and Hartley with their guns, and Liam with his rage, not many survived.

The loyal S.H.I.E.L.D. agents filtered in as well, along with an injured Agent Gonzales. He and two other S.H.I.E.L.D. agents from the bridge were badly injured, but alive.

When Aria woke up, the bright lights and bustling sounds confused her. She tried to sit up, but a firm hand stopped her. Liam came into view, grinning like a little kid. She turned her head, to see who he was smiling at.

"Mom…? Mom?" Aria's voice cracked and tears started pouring down her face. Morse, completely overwhelmed, could only nod and squeeze her hand. Aria practically crawled into her arms, sobbing into Morse's neck uncontrollably.

Both Hunter's had been thrown through a loop when they saw their long lost mother; Liam had channeled his emotions into his powers. The decks literally ran with blood as the last of Hydra died. But Aria had no one to kill or hurt, so she just sobbed. She told her mother everything; everything that Liam had tried to fill her in on and everything that he'd never known.

Birthdays, holidays, battles, hard choices, all were unloaded onto the stunned Bobbi Morse. When Aria finally fell back to sleep, Liam tried again to explain.

"I know you have no clue what's happening, and that this is probably the worst day of your life. At the very least, the weirdest." Liam started, gently taking Aria's hand in his.

"But you've just made my sister human again. It's something I've tried to do for the past twenty two years, and you did it by just being here. Thank you." Liam's voice was deep and pained, as if years of hurt were coming to the surface.

"I don't know you who you people are; this all sounds so crazy…" Morse said, shaking her head and leaning back in her chair. "But this girl thinks the world of me. How is that possible?"

"The world's a weird place. You get used to it, eventually." Liam said softly.

"Is that a fact from the future?"

"A promise from the present." Liam said with a smile. "I know you want nothing more than to get back to your normal life; but whether or not we'd been here; your life would

have turned upside down on this ship. I hope we haven't made that worse."

Bobbi looked back at the sleeping woman beside her, still looking shocked and confused. "How could you two have made this worse?"

* * *

><p>"Director Fury, we've lost communications with the Iliad. We have to assume the prisoners escaped." Agent Hill said mournfully. She was in Fury's office again, the same tablet in her hand.<p>

"I agree. There were a lot of good agents on that boat." Fury said reverently. He was leaning back in his chair, looking out at the sunrise through the windows.

"Sir, Insight is ready to launch. The Avengers are here and have been briefed on the situation. Coulson's team is en route to the carrier now, and we have the president of the United States on hold, demanding answers. What are our orders?"

Fury shook his head slowly, watching as the sun rose slowly over the horizon.

"Launch Insight now. Kill those monsters before they touch another one of my agents."

5. Chapter 5

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* * *

><p>Ward's head hurt; Liam hadn't been lying, death didn't sound so bad right now. Every muscle in his body ached, his eyes wouldn't focus, and his stomach felt like heaving its contents.<p>

"I know you're awake."

Ward tensed up, blinking away his drowsiness. He could hear someone in the room with him; May. She didn't sound tired, she sounded calm. Cool. Collected. That was _never_ a good sign.

"May? What's going on?" He tried to sit up, his vision slowly coming back to normal. Through the haze, the image of May holding a gun appeared in front of him. A sneer was resting on her lips and her weapon was pointed straight at his face. He held his hands up innocently while his brain slowly put the pieces together.

"May?"

"Liam said you were Hydra." May said simply. "I don't like Liam. But then again, the Iliad just got its short range communications back online. They say Hydra tried to take over the ship."

"Look, May…"

"Don't lie to me, Ward." She held her gun tighter, drawing the hammer back with her thumb. "I will kill you."

They both sat silently for a moment. They were in the infirmary, but no one else was around.

"The others don't believe it. I don't know what to believe. But after everything that's happened, I'm taking no chances." May threatened.

"May… I am not Hydra!" Ward said resolutely, staring her in the eye, trying his best to look sincere. He didn't know what to believe either. He was taken in by Garrett; shown a new path. If that path had really been shattered by two Enhanced, then he wasn't so anxious to stay loyal to it.

"John Garrett. We looked into his newly declassified records. His logs. His communications. There's no doubt he was a mole, the question is, for who?" May asked, still aiming her weapon at his face. "C.I.A.? F.B.I.? Some other organization we haven't heard of?"

"May…"

"Or maybe those two lunatics were telling the truth. On the Iliad there are a dozen officers that will swear Liam and Aria Hunter are with S.H.I.E.L.D. Liam especially slaughtered half of the Hydra onboard singlehandedly. The same thing happened at the Triskelion, didn't it? We know he was killing Hydra today. What about yesterday?"

May knelt down so she was face to face with him, her eyes boring into his skull. "You and Garrett were like father and son. If he was Hydra, you knew about it. The question is, how deep were you in this mess?"

Ward swallowed hard, blinking rapidly as he tried to think. A dozen lies presented themselves; a dozen ways to get past May and off the plane. But why?

"Garrett was a monster." Ward admitted. "He was arrogant, self righteous, and convinced that he knew the way to run the entire world. He wanted me in on that. I had no reason to say no."

"You admit it then." May seemed surprised.

"I admit my loyalties lied with Garrett. But if was Hydra, and if he's dead now…"

"We're all you've got left. I'm not sure I like that system of yours, Ward. What happens when a better offer comes to town?" She leveled the gun again, and Ward was sure she'd shoot him this time.

"Fine! Go on! Kill me too! Explain to Coulson that a suspicion of yours cost him his best agent! Tell Fitz and Simmons what happened to me! Deal with Skye when she finds out you executed me!" Ward shouted.

May sneered at him again, gripping her weapon even tighter than before. When she spoke, her voice was dripping with malice.

"The team needs you. Cross a line. Any line. And I will put you down without a second thought. Clear?" May demanded. Ward nodded slowly, eyeing the gun in her hands.

As suddenly as it had started, it was over. May stormed out of the room, and Ward was left to himself. He let out the breath he'd been holding in, his nerves finally catching up to him. He was close… so close to losing everything. He'd built a life here, and he'd almost lost it. All because Liam Hunter decided to torture Garrett first.

He slammed his fist into the wall, shaking with rage. Who was May to threaten him? Who was Coulson to judge him? He'd saved their lives, he'd risked his own! He was as much a member of the team as…

"Hey, are you okay?" Skye stood in the doorway, looking cautiously inward.

Her hair was hanging loosely at her shoulders. Her eyes were filled with honest concern. Her hands were resting on the frame of the door, as if she were unsure about being there. With him. She bit her lip lightly, and he could hear her soft, slow breaths.

"I'm fine." Ward stood up, straightening his shirt and rolling his neck experimentally. "That thing packed a punch is all. What's happening out here?"

She immediately brightened; her smile came back, her eyes locked onto his. Ward was home. This was where he was staying. No doubt about it.

"We got a transmission from the Iliad and we're trying to get in contact with Fury again. Turns out those Hunters weren't as bad as we thought."

"Are you sure about that? They looked like killers yesterday." Ward reminded her.

"Maybe. But we've got a few killers of our own."

For a split second, he thought she was talking about him. Had he slipped up? Had she seen something…? But no. She was just talking in general. There was no fear in her eyes. He followed her out to the conference room, his earlier conversation with May forgotten.

"Director Fury, the commander of the Iliad has already confirmed that the Hunter siblings aren't hostile!" Coulson was saying, speaking to the image of Fury on the giant screen in front of him. The rest of the team was nearby, eavesdropping shamelessly.

"Tell that to the mile and a half long list of dead agents I've got!" Fury snapped. But in a second, his expression softened. "I don't know a thing about these people. That pisses me off. Tell me something about them. Anything concrete, and I'll have more options. But right now, I want a way to end this threat. Insight is being launched as we

speak." Fury typed a command onto his tablet, and their video feed switched to the river outside the Triskelion.

They all watched as the water parted, giant hangar doors opened, and three massive ships rose from the depths. Arc Reactor engines glowed blue as they struggled to lift the great carriers into the sky. Crews on the ground watched as they continued to rise, their ascent completely unhindered.

"With these new carriers, we'll be able to deal with a lot of threats before they happen. In the case of the Hunters, we'll have a backup plan." Fury said, his voice coming through over the new video feed.

"A backup plan, sir?" Coulson asked hopefully.

"Agent Coulson, you already have a unique team. Your agents have a lot of experience, and these two seem to have some sort of connection with you. Secure the Iliad, and get your hands on these new assets." Fury said gravely. A smile appeared on Coulson's face.

"I want them interrogated, I want them Indexed, I want to know what color their underwear is! When you have an in depth report of their condition, we'll decide what to do next. Fury out."

The monitor faded to black, and Coulson's smile grew wider. May was back in the cockpit, with Trip right beside her. He'd done a good job flying the bus, but May didn't share easily.

Fitz and Simmons were nearby, whispering amongst themselves. When Ward and Skye approached, Coulson turned to face them.

"You heard all of that?"

"Most of it. I'm anxious to take a crack at this Liam guy." Ward said darkly.

"Not necessary. According to Agent Gonzales, they were both willingly taken into custody once it was clear the girl was going to live. They'll be transferred onboard as soon as we land." Coulson explained. Ward looked noticeably disappointed.

"Fitzsimmons, are you two up for studying their powers up close?"

"Well yes, it's actually pretty interesting, we think that Liam uses his own nervous system to-"

"Good." Coulson had a dazed look in his eye and cut them off before Simmons could go on. "May says we'll be landing in a few moments."

* * *

><p>Aria was stabilized; the bullet had been removed and she'd been sewn up nicely. She'd refused all forms of pain medication; she swore she was immune to pain. Liam didn't know if that was true or not, but his sister definitely had a high tolerance for the stuff.<p>

They were both in handcuffs, which was laughable. Liam could have easily broken them with the energy still in his system, while Aria

didn't need free use of her hands to use her abilities. Her range was limited and it took focus, but Aria could drop any enemy in a heartbeat. Not many men could stand up to their reproductive organs suddenly feeling like they were on fire.

Standing on the flight deck with agents around them, they waited for the bus to land. So far Aria and Liam had trashed the Triskelion, kidnapped Coulson's team, invaded the Iliad and killed dozens of people. Liam honestly had no idea what kind of a reception they'd be getting, and he barely cared. They'd completed their mission, they'd met their mother, they'd done everything they'd wanted to. After this, Liam didn't know what to expect.

Aria was standing beside him; she was weak, but stable. They'd tried to get her to stay on the gurney, but she refused. She wasn't groggy or sore, so the only real risk was of her tearing her stitches.

Wind whipped at them as the massive black plane landed carefully on the carrier's deck. Aria smiled as the wheels touched down.

"Not exactly the Zephyr 2, is it?"

"Hopefully this lasts longer than Zephyr 2 did."

"_I _didn't take it into orbitâ€¦"

"Neither did I. Blame Noah." Liam snorted. Aria looked confused, but didn't have the chance to say more.

The ramp that Liam had managed to pull apart earlier had been replaced, and Coulson walked down in it confidently. He stopped a few feet from them as agents surrounded the odd group, weapons ready.

"My name is Agent Phil Coulson. But I guess you already know that." Coulson said needlessly. His eyes narrowed as he studied them both, his features pulled into a strained smile. Liam only nodded in response.

"You'll be taken onboard our plane for questioning. If at any time we feel you've comprised our security, we'll send this bus to the bottom of the ocean with you on it. Is that clear?" Coulson asked.

Both and Liam and Aria knew there were compartments inside the bus that could withstand an ocean dive; Doctors Fitz and Simmons had briefed them on the experience once. But bringing it up then would only have confused things. Liam nodded again.

"Come with me and don't make any sudden moves." Coulson started to turn and walk back up the ramp when Liam stopped him.

"Let me be very clear. We are only doing this because we were convinced by Agent Morse that this was best. If at any time _we_ feel you've comprised _our_ security, I will do whatever I have to in the defense of my sister or myself. Hurt her, or in any way make her uncomfortable andâ€¦" Liam tossed the shattered remains of his handcuffs to Coulson before tapping his sister's. They dropped to the ground with a clatter, and Liam led the way onboard the bus.

Coulson watched them go as they expertly navigated the interior of

his plane. He shook his head and commented on it to one of the agents next to him.

"I already have a headache."

"We were in charge of 'securing' them. We know all about that…" The agent groaned. Coulson laughed and followed onto the plane, still shaking his head.

[Break]

Liam sat quietly in the metal chair, looking around at the empty room. It was just like the photos he'd seen, but somehow smaller in person. Granted, he'd written that report on the dimensions of the bus back in fifth grade; everything seemed bigger back then.

Coulson sat down across from him and folded his hands carefully. They were being watched by the security camera behind Liam; he was sure everything he said and did was being recorded.

"You seem pretty comfortable." Coulson noticed.

Liam nodded. "I wrote a report on this entire aircraft when I was a kid."

"Really? So you know all about this room?" Coulson asked, looking around at the metal plates lining the walls.

"I know less than a month ago an Asgardian flew through that roof. I know that same Asgardian seduced a member of your team. I know more about Tahiti than you ever will. I know about your urge to carve strange symbols in the wall. And I know you're worried about Skye, now that you've injected the same formula into her."

Coulson looked unnerved. A bead of sweat appeared on his brow. "Why don't we just start at the beginning, shall we?"

"Ah yes, the beginning! Do you mean my birth, my arrival in this timeline, or your death at the hands of another Asgardian. Loki."

Again, Coulson looked unnerved. "You going to keep doing that?"

"Doing what?"

"Throwing in details you shouldn't possibly know in an attempt to unhinge me. I have to admit, that's kind of old hat for a guy claiming to be from the future." Coulson said sarcastically. Liam laughed.

"Sorry. What was your question again?" Liam asked, a little more serious now.

"Let's start with your birth. Your parents, your birthplace, your birth time…"

Liam sighed and nodded, trying to arrange his thoughts. "That's a good place to start. My mother as I'm sure you've heard by now, is Agent Barbara 'Bobbi' Morse. My father is Agent Lance Hunter. I was

born on Zephyr 1; an aircraft designed by Agent Leo
Fitz."

"Fitz?"

"The guy. I know you can't tell them apart yet." Liam smiled. Coulson
smiled and nodded for him to continue.

"It wasn't the best place, time, or circumstance, but that's the
story of my life. I watched the video once; kind of weird, let me
tell you. Especially since some of the people in it were dead at the
time I played it."

* * *

><p>Red in the face with sweat streaming down her forehead, Bobbi
Morse screamed again, so loud the instruments fairly rattled at her
side.<p>

"Breathe, Bob, breathe!" Hunter begged, holding her hand tightly. He
was right at her side, and had been for the entire labor.

"Iâ€¦ knowâ€¦" She interrupted herself with another bone-chilling
wail, while Jemma Simmons came back with a bandage on her
hand.

"Here we go, sorry about thatâ€¦" Simmons tucked her hair back up and
lifted up Morse's medical gown. "Won't be long now! Have you two
thought of a name?"

Bobbi screamed again, and Hunter shook his head quickly.

"Not the timeâ€¦ right. Fitz, get in here! I need your help!" Simmons
yelled. Fitz looked into the room hesitantly as the entire aircraft
shook again.

"Is that turbulence or a bloody missile? Tell May to keep this thing
in the air already!" Hunter demanded. Simmons had dropped a tray full
of instruments on the last rough patch and cut her hand as she tried
to pick them up.

Fitz reluctantly came back into the room and helped clear away the
other samples and specimens waiting for analysis while Simmons
monitored their progress.

"He'sâ€¦ comingâ€¦" Morse panted, screaming again as another
contraction caught her. She squeezed Hunter's hand so hard he started
to turn red in the face too. The plane shook yet again, and Simmons
almost lost her balance.

"Oh! This is not the best time to be shooting it out with the Air
Force!" Simmons shouted at no one. She grabbed a spare blanket for
the infant as Fitz finished cleaning the improvised maternity
ward.

"Okay, what do I do know?" Fitz asked nervously.

"Get ready to cut the umbilical cord; sorry Hunter but we don't have
the time for you to do it!" Simmons apologized. She stood in front of
Morse as Fitz grabbed a pair of scissors from a drawer.

"What are you talking about? I don't want to cut anything; just get this parasite out of her before it kills her!" Hunter yelled.

"He's notâ€¦ a parasiteâ€¦!" Morse screamed again, and in another moment, a new scream entered the mix. Morse seemed to explode from the release of tension, and Simmons quickly wiped the new infant down with a towel.

"There we go! Look, look how precious he is!" Simmons cooed. She handed the bundle to its mother, watching as she cried and held him close.

"I told you, Lance!" Bobbi sobbed. "I told you we'd make it!"

Hunter relaxed noticeably as he saw his son, stroking the baby's cheek with one finger.

"We just lost an engine! Brace yourselves!"

6. Chapter 6

* * *

><p>"Sounds like fun." Coulson said after Liam paused.<p>

"We lost Zephyr 1 that night. Everyone on board jumped into a containment pod and we jettisoned as the plane went down over the Arctic."

"Hmm. So, Agent Morse is stationed on this carrier, and you said Lance Hunter is a gun for hire?" Coulson asked, as if he were doubting the validity of the story.

"Right. Agent Hartley finds and recruits him after S.H.I.E.L.D. fell. She and the rest of her team died shortly after you sent them on their first mission; Hunter was the only survivor."

"So, I sent them to their deaths? What kind of mission was this?" Coulson demanded.

"We're getting off topic. Don't you want to hear more about me?" Liam joked.

"Fine. Why was the Air Force shooting at us?"

"Because the head of the ATCU had been assassinated and with the help of an alien parasite, Malik managed to pin it on S.H.I.E.L.D."

"Oh, right, that completely answers the question."

"Look. Our lives are complicated. I'm summarizing. After Hydra attacked the Triskelion, Insight was destroyed and S.H.I.E.L.D. fell,

bad stuff happened. You're welcome." Liam paused for a second, his curiosity getting the best of him. "Has Insight launched yet?"

Coulson was immediately onto him, but answered anyway. "It has."

"Good. Now, there's still my sister to talk about. My mother had a rough pregnancy with me; I almost killed her. That's why my father was less than thrilled during my birth. He'd opted for abortion."

"He told you that?" Coulson asked, shocked at the callousness of the idea.

"In his defense he was drunk and his wife had just died. With my sister, though, it was different. The pregnancy went well, the birth was in a controlled environment, she wasâ€¦ perfect. In every way. I was one year old at the time, and two agents no one thought would settle down were suddenly toting infants and worrying about wet wipes. It was hilarious, at first." Liam's expression grew darker as he remembered his past.

"I was diagnosed with a mild form of autism at four. My sister had a rare condition that left her incredibly sensitive to touch. In essence, I couldn't embrace the world around me, and she knew only pain for the first few years of her life. Ironic, isn't it?"

Coulson had no comment for that remark.

"So there we were; a normal family dealing with normal things. Until the day I was sick."

* * *

><p>Hunter was worried; Liam wasn't usually so tired or morose in the mornings. Detached, sure, but not sluggish. He barely moved and refused to eat his oatmeal, which was not a good sign. It was ninety percent of the boy's diet; all one color and texture-less so as not to cause issues.<p>

Hunter tried to get him to eat another spoonful, but Liam wouldn't have it. He sat in the chair quietly and sniffed occasionally.

"I got Aria dressed but she's refusing to anything else without a status report from dad." Morse said severely as she walked into the kitchen. Their apartment was tiny, but it was out of the way. Both Hydra and S.H.I.E.L.D. were problematic when it came to raising kids.

"Oh really? Am I in for a full debriefing?" Hunter asked absentmindedly.

"Oh yeah. Dressing down. Prepare for a lecture. On unicorns." Morse said with a smile. Hunter stood up from beside Liam and kissed his wife good morning, holder her a little longer than normal.

"My favorite kind of debriefing. I'll back with a fully geared up Aria in two minutes!" He promised. "And try to get Liam to eat, will you? He's having one of his bad daysâ€¦"

"On it." Morse said with a sigh. Hunter disappeared into the nursery while Morse sat down beside her son. She tried to catch his eye, but he always refused to make eye contact with anyone.

"Come here buddy…" Morse scooted his chair around and scooped up the bowl of oatmeal, stirring it around with the tiny plastic spoon. Liam wouldn't touch anything unless it was served in a purple colored plastic bowl with matching spoon.

"Here, it's your favorite! No flavor or color to be found!" She joked, holding up a spoonful of the white mush.

"No? Not even a bite?" Morse asked, teasing the spoon closer and closer to his mouth.

Liam's only response was another sniff. Worried, Morse put the bowl on the table and pulled him onto her lap. She quickly put a hand to his forehead before he could protest.

"You feel a little warm. Do you have a fever?" She asked out of habit. She'd been talking to him since the day he was born, but he rarely if ever answered. Talking just wasn't one of his strong suits. She morbidly wondered to herself if he had _any_ strong suits.

"Alright! Our littlest agent is dressed and ready to go!" Hunter whooped, carrying Aria in on his shoulders. She giggled hysterically while clinging to her dad's head, with his hands wrapped protectively around her.

"Something up with Liam?"

"I think he has a fever; tell Coulson I'll be late today." Morse said as she sat Liam back down in his chair.

"That bad?" Hunter asked, slipping Aria back into his arms. Morse shook her head.

"I don't know but I'm not dropping him off at school until I'm sure. Go on and take Aria; she loves it and I don't want her getting sick too."

"Will do. Be back in a tick." Hunter leaned over to kiss her again and walked out the door with Aria in tow.

As the door shut and silence once again reigned, Morse sighed and tried to get him to eat again.

"Come on Liam; you've got to eat!"

"Am I an agent too?" Liam suddenly said, clear as day. It startled Morse, as it always did. He so rarely spoke, but for a four year old, his English was almost better than Hunter's.

"What's that sweetie?" She asked out of habit; he never repeated himself.

"Well, no, you're not an agent. Just daddy and me."

"Is that bad? Shouldn't I be an agent too?" Liam asked, looking up at her for the first time that day. Morse fairly melted under his gaze, and leaned over to hug him.

"No, no Liam! You're too young to be an agent too. You've got to grow up first, and the only way to do that is to-"

Tinkling glass interrupted her, and Bobbi Morse slumped down onto the table.

"Mom?"

Their living room window had a new hole in it, and blood pooled onto the table.

"Mom?"

* * *

><p>Coulson looked more than a little affected now. He had his hand over his mouth as Liam told the story, listening intently to every word.<p>

"You watched your mother die?"

"It took a while too. She woke up before she bled out." Liam ground out, the memory bringing back more pain than he imagined.

"Who did it?"

"The shot was made from a city block away, in low light, and punched through a pane of glass before taking her in the lower neck. To you this means nothing. To future you, it means everything. There was only one man on earth with an M.O. like that." He waited for Coulson to put it together, but realized he wasn't going to.

"Grant Ward. But not the Grant Ward you know; the one who swore loyalty to Hydra, tried to kill Fitzsimmons, succeeded in killing your future girlfriend, the one who-"

"Stop!" Coulson snapped, slamming his hand on the table. Liam raised an eyebrow, amused at his reaction.

"Sorry about that. It's all ancient history for me. I guess it's a little harder when the man is still sleeping in your house and eating at your table."

"Get back to the story. Morse died; then what?"

"Then everything changed."

* * *

><p>Life was hard for Liam. Always had been, always would be. That was the truth he faced every day. He walked into his family's quarters, setting his tablet down on the table near the door.<p>

"Aria, dad! I'm home." He looked around the small room and found his sister in her bed, covers pulled over her head.

"Hey, what's wrong?" Liam pulled the covers back to see tears covering Aria's face.

"Daddy's drinking again!"

Liam's face got hot and he grit his teeth. "It's okay; just try to calm down. I think Doctor Simmons wanted to see you in the lab; better run and see what's up." Liam lied. Aria nodded and ran out, barefoot and still dressed in pajamas.

Liam stood up and walked towards their dad's room; the only other room of their 'house'. They lived in Shield headquarters, one level below the rest of the base. Liam had just celebrated his tenth birthday in a Quin-jet flying over Pennsylvania. As a birthday present, Uncle Mac had the agent flying the jet let Liam take the stick. He'd almost crashed the plane and sworn never to fly again.

Liam pushed the door open to see Lance Hunter sitting at his tiny desk, sobbing over an old picture frame. Liam knew it was the picture of them; the whole family. It was taken the day Aria was born and was one of the few nice photos they had.

Lance took another swig of his bottle of whiskey and swallowed hard. When he noticed Liam watching him, he exploded.

"What's wrong with you? Stop peeping in here like a bloody spy! Get to school before Fitz comes looking for you!"

"Already went." Liam practically spit the words. Lance didn't know what to say, so took another swig of his bottle.

"Well, get out of here! Find something to do! Your sister was bawling again for no reasonâ€¦"

"She was scared."

"Scared of what? All of bloody S.H.I.E.L.D. is right on top of usâ€¦"

"Scared of you." Liam had learned to cope with his autism; it was better than they originally thought and they had the best doctors in S.H.I.E.L.D. right next door. Fitz especially helped with his speech. But when it came to his dad, he barely tried.

"What?" Lance wiped his eyes and tossed the empty bottle away, staring hard at his son for a moment.

Just for a second, the alcohol, the pain, and the memories faded away. Liam's father looked him in the eye for the first time in weeks.

"I'mâ€¦ I'm sorry Liamâ€¦" He sniffed and wiped his face again. "I justâ€¦"

Liam walked over to him and gave him an awkward hug.

"Miss her too."

But then he was gone. He shoved Liam back and yelled about how Liam 'pretended' to be autistic, but was suddenly touchy-feely because he felt like it. Liam walked out of the room, letting the door close behind him.

* * *

><p>"Rough childhood." Coulson commented dryly.<p>

"I grew up in S.H.I.E.L.D. Fitz taught me how to deal with life. Simmons how to make it better. Mac how to fix things; May how to break them. You taught me that there was a time when it was all better. My father taught me those times were gone."

"You ever tried writing poetry? That was kind of nice." Coulson said sincerely. Liam only grimaced.

"I hate poetry. It's dry and pointless."

"Of course. Not that I don't love reliving your traumatic past, but could we skip forward a little bit?" Coulson asked hesitantly. "Like, say, to when you developed super powers and made the decision to go back in time?"

"Sure. That was on my sixteenth birthday; Aria was only fifteen. But for this to make sense, you need to know what _should_ have happened in the next few months. Your carving gets worse. Those pictures you're making? They're a map. That map leads to a city, and a monolith. Maybe not the right word; dang thing fits in your hand." Liam gestured about the size he meant, and Coulson started taking notes.

"The monolith is Kree too. Turns out the Kree came here thousands of years ago, looking for soldiers. They experimented on humans, gave a few hundred of them a gene-therapy that gave them powers, and designed crystals to unleash these powers. Any unaltered human who touches them dies painfully. And slowly, I might add. Hands off, if ever you see one." Liam joked.

"That's how Hartley died, and that was the mission. Secure the item from a warehouse where they were keeping old S.H.I.E.L.D. stuff. She popped it out of the case, into her hand, and died minutes later. Hunter was in the process of cutting off her hand at the point."

"Lovely." Coulson looked a little sick, but Liam kept going.

"Inside that monolith was a crystal. The monolith opened in this underground city, and exposed Skye and 'Flowers'. They were both changed drastically. Flowers got a hedgehog hairdo and the ability to see into the future. Skye got a much cooler deal."

"Go on."

"She can control and manipulate the natural vibrations of every day objects. She can cause an earthquake with her mind or shake apart the gun in your holster. That took a while to get a handle on. But she did. Along the way, she met her parents, watched one of them die, and put the other through Tahiti, just like you. He's now a veterinarian."

"Oh I see. Super powers, veterinarians, and underground cities."
Coulson finished writing and looked up at Liam expectantly. "I'm with
you. Go on."

* * *

><p>Commander Daisy Johnson walked through the halls of S.H.I.E.L.D.
headquarters with a limp and an attitude. The old, dim lights above
her seemed to fizzle at her approach, and she couldn't tell if it was
the wiring or her powers acting up again.<p>

Her short hair bobbed as she walked while her gaze remained fixed on
the hallway ahead of her. She was almost completely alone, and that
was adding to her frustration. As she passed the lab, she
instinctively looked inside, hoping to see Fitz or Simmons. Instead
it was empty; they were finally on a 'honeymoon' in the Arctic,
trying to salvage anything from the wreck of Zephyr 1.

She'd already been to the garage; Mac was hurt and recovering in the
infirmary. When she'd walked in, there'd been no one to call her
Tremors or offer a solution involving an axe.

Coulson was on mission with Hunter, trying to get him out of his
funk. Joey and Lincoln were with them in case something went wrong.
The rest of their agents were either already assigned to other tasks
to or too incompetent to be of any use. Daisy was frustrated, and it
wasn't getting any better.

At the peak of her annoyance, she spotted a shape in the doorway
ahead of her. She groaned inwardly and came to a stop, considering a
quick retreat. But no, Liam Hunter had already seen her.

"Hi." He said simply. He looked at her strangely; somewhere between
respect andâ€¦ fear? Attraction? Daisy couldn't tell anymore.

"Hi. Bye." She turned on her heel and started to walk away, but he
started following her. Not trying to catch up or overtake her, just
enough to keep her in sight. She groaned out loud this time and
turned to face him.

"What do you want, kid?" She asked gruffly. The hope was to scare him
off; the sixteen year old was incredibly anti-social, despite Fitz
best efforts, and normally that scared him off. Not today,
however.

"To help." He said simply. He wasn't a bad looking kid; with Lance
and Bobbi's genes in him and the lifestyle of a S.H.I.E.L.D. agent,
he was muscular and hard looking. He had no facial hair to speak of,
but she couldn't tell if that was due to shaving or a lack of growth.
It was his eyes that jumped out at her; they seemed to be analyzing
her every move.

"Help with what?" Daisy asked, a little gentler.

"Your mission." He stood up straighter and started reciting facts
like he was in one of Fitz's 'school' sessions.

"Two days ago a known Hydra bought a shell company for the purpose of
buying a warehouse. That warehouse was then transferred to the name

of a man who died last year and the company was dissolved. The warehouse has seen a lot of vehicle traffic in the past twenty four hours and Hydra is of course suspected. Satellite images show crates of fish oil bottles being taken _out_ of the warehouse, when none had been brought in. We suspect Hydra is using the warehouse as a plant to manufacture more Inhuman triggering drugs."

Daisy was impressed; it was like getting the report from Director Coulson himself.

"You're wrong on one point; _we_ don't suspect nothing. _I _suspect Hydra, and _I _will deal with it."

"You and what army?" Liam laughed. It was the first time she'd heard him laugh; echoing off the empty halls, it creeped her out to end.

"Listen kid,"

"Liam." He interrupted.

"I know. Listen kid, I don't want or need your help. I have powers and a Quin-jet. I'm good to go." Daisy argued.

"The last time you flew one of them you almost crashed it into a wall. My sister's a pilot." Liam countered.

"Where is your sister?" Daisy asked. Aria was the apple of Simmons eye and turning into a spoiled teenaged girl rapidly. She had a way of getting under Daisy's skin too.

"Right here, duh!"

Daisy jumped as Aria appeared behind her, smiling broadly.

"Don't do that! What do you want from me?" Daisy demanded, backing up so that she had a wall behind her.

"I said, 'to help'. We want to help." Liam repeated.

"Are you serious? You're like fourteen!" Daisy objected, purposely getting their ages wrong.

"Sixteen and fifteen. You need a pilot and I can help with the mission. You are hurt and can't fly a Quin-jet. I don't think this is a difficult decision." Liam pointed out arrogantly, nodding at the bandage on her leg.

Daisy hated to admit it, but the kid was right. She couldn't fly a Quin-jet to save her life; she'd been planning on driving one of their SUV's. Which would be difficult since the warehouse had tight ground security, and her leg really was injured. Shrapnel from an explosion had nearly killed her; the leg was the last to heal.

"You aren't agents."

"Neither were you, when you joined S.H.I.E.L.D., remember€¦?" Aria said, drawing out the last word annoyingly.

"That's different. I was twenty five and already living on my

own."

"I can load and fire a nine-millimeter handgun as fast, or faster, than you can. Aria can fly a jet. This is the definition of an easy assignment. We don't even know for sure that this is a Hydra base; it might just be a coincidence." Liam pointed out.

Daisy was still hesitant. She didn't like dealing with Bobbi's kids; it unnerved her. Listening to Liam argue was like listening to Bobbi. Looking into Aria's eyes was like looking at Bobbi. She was gone, her kids were here, and Daisy was scared to death of breaking them. Taking them out into the field was the opposite of keeping them safe.

"How about this? _We_ are going to this warehouse. _You_ may come along if you'd like." Aria said, doing her best to sound like she was in charge. Liam shrugged and followed her, and the two headed for the hangar.

"Wait! You can't just walk off base!" Daisy yelled after them.

"One: Watch us. Two: We're flying, not walking. Three: Hurry up if you want to come." Aria counted off each point on a finger, not slowing down in the slightest. Liam smiled a little and gave Daisy an 'I told you so' look.

Daisy shook her head and limped after them, already dreading the mission to come.

7. Chapter 7

DISCLAIMER: I do not now, nor have I ever, owned the characters and settings of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. I own only the characters I myself have created. Any views, opinions, or beliefs of these characters does not necessarily reflect the views, opinions or beliefs of myself.

* * *

><p>"We're over the warehouse now. I'm keeping the cloak operational but powering down all other systems. The ramp is lowered and you have a go." Aria said dramatically, expertly navigating the mess of controls. Daisy was more than a little jealous; this girl couldn't legally drive a car by herself but was perfectly capable of flying to Paris for lunch. Meanwhile Daisy had super powers but couldn't get the aircraft off the ground.<p>

"Thanks, Commander Aria!" Daisy shot back at her, loading her weapon as she spoke.

"You're welcome." She said sincerely. Liam shook his head and laughed.

"Don't encourage her. Her ego's big enough already."

"I heard that!" Aria shouted.

"Come on; let's do this before someone gets killed." Daisy led the way out of the jet, holding her gun tightly as she scanned the

rooftop. There was no one in sight, but that didn't mean anything.

"Roof access on that stairwell, that fire escape, and that skylight. Which one are we using?" Liam asked, pulling out his own weapon. Daisy had been more than hesitant to let either of them bring weapons, but both of them could were beyond proficient in their use. Liam especially was a dead shot to a degree Daisy rarely saw.

"We aren't using any of them. _I_ am going down the stairwell. Stay here and guard the plane. I'll be back five." Without another word, Daisy stalked off towards the door in front of them. She was surprised when Liam didn't protest or try to follow; instead, he just stood firmly on the ramp.

The door opened easily, and Daisy proceeded down the creaky metal stairs. It was incredibly dark; she pulled out a flashlight and held it over her gun. There was no sound, no sign of life, and no reason to be worried. And yet she was terrified. She needed to be here, in the field, but having two teenagers on the roof? That went against everything she knew about field operations.

She finally reached another old, metal door on the bottom of the stairs. Her guess was that she'd travelled down almost to ground level; the staircase was completely enclosed and more than a little claustrophobic. With a quick breath, she kicked the door down.

On the other side, the first thing she noticed was the sound of bubbling water. The aroma of decaying fish hit her next, and almost floored her. Looking around, Daisy could see crates of plastic bottles with all sorts of labels; everything from fish oil to vitamins for children.

Behind the supply of pills was a long conveyor belt that led deeper into the warehouse; metal tins of pills were being cranked out by the hundreds. Beyond that, giant, sunken tanks of fish were embedded into the concrete in a grid formation. In the center was a large metal rack, and blue crystalline rods waiting to be thrown into the water!

Daisy was shocked at the sight, but more shocked at the sound of gunfire. She ducked and rolled behind a stack of crates, trying to pick out the shooter in all of the mess. At least two men were behind the conveyor belt, firing from the hip with automatic weapons. Soon, the pounding of boots on concretes echoed through the warehouse, and she knew she was in trouble.

She quickly fired off two shots in the direction of the shooter, but they immediately opened up with a half dozen guns. Bullets flew and wood splintered as she ducked down again, trying to avoid the flying lead.

She holstered her weapon and let her mind clear, focusing on the metal of the conveyor belt; it hummed its own little tune, like a sad instrument in an orchestra. With a quick breath, she jumped up and raised her hands, sending out a shockwave of force towards the men. The entire conveyor belt lifted up and flew backwards, taking out three of the gunners instantly. But there was still gunfire, and from different spots now.

She bit back the urge to scream as a bullet tore through her palm, whipping her arm around painfully. She sank to the ground and tried to put pressure on it, her concentration utterly gone. She snatched at the radio in her ear and spoke rapidly.

"Aria! Liam! Get out of here! There's Hydra everywhere and I'm pinned down!"

"We're on our way."

"Not what I meant! Just go, there's nothing you can do!" Daisy shouted, trying to be heard over the volleys of gunfire. She heard the engines of the Quin-jet firing up, and she breathed a sigh of relief. She should have waited.

The glass skylight over the long conveyor belt suddenly shattered, and a massive air conditioning unit fell onto the factory floor. Two men were killed instantly, and three more ran for cover as glass shards rained down.

Seconds later, the front door burst open and light streamed in as two figures walked calmly into the warehouse, firing continually. Liam was taller than Aria, and that was the only way Daisy could tell them apart from that distance. Their shots were synchronized and their movements were like trained soldiers; another half dozen Hydra fell from their withering fire. At the last second, they both tucked and rolled in opposite directions.

Liam ended up next to Daisy, while Aria was across the warehouse floor behind another stack of crates. He wordlessly reloaded and glanced at Daisy's hand.

"You're hurt."

"You're an idiot!"

"No, _we're _idiots." Liam shot back with a faint smile. He popped up and fired again right as Aria did; the last three Hydra agents were blown back into the tanks of fish, screaming as they went.

Over a dozen Hydra agents were lying dead around them; more were just out of sight. Daisy caught her breath and looked at the two teenagers again, shock and disbelief written on her face.

"How did youâ€¦?"

"Liam!" Aria screamed and they both jumped at the same time. Another Hydra agent had been hiding in the crates, and snatched Aria up with one arm. His other hand held a gun to her forehead, and he quickly backpedaled out of range.

"Let her go!" Liam shouted instinctively. He leveled his gun at the man's head, but he was moving too fast for an easy shot.

"Now now! Let's not get hasty! Wouldn't want this pretty thing to get hurt, right?" He drawled on, his voice thick and harsh.

Daisy stood beside Liam, her gun raised as well. Liam whispered so softly she barely heard him.

"Can you do anything?"

"Not without getting her too." Daisy answered, trying desperately to get a bead on the man. He was ducking and weaving back and forth around the tanks, Aria struggling in his arms.

"Let her go, now! Do it, and you walk out of here alive! Otherwise, I will kill you where you stand!" Liam threatened. The man laughed cruelly.

"Oh really? And how do you-"

While he was talking, Aria stepped on his foot and slammed her head into his chin, knocking him back a step. She dove to the floor as Liam opened fire, emptying his new clip into the man's chest.

He walked forward as he fired, each round digging a new hole into the man's chest. Aria remained completely still on the ground, not daring to move. When Liam's gun clicked on empty, he sank to one knee to look at Aria. The man was still standing, dead on his feet.

It all happened at once. Liam put his hand on Aria's shoulder. Aria looked up at him. The man toppled, and Daisy screamed.

The rack of crystals fell to the ground as the man knocked into it, and with a huge crash, blue mist seeped into the air.

"Liam! Aria!" Daisy was already running, her eyes wide with horror. Before either teen could move, the mist encircled them and black stone formed around their skin. Daisy slid to the ground and grabbed a hold of Liam, staring into his eyes as the mist surrounded them.

"Noâ€¦!" Daisy's voice cracked as tears ran out of her eyes. She held Liam's shoulders gently, as if any movement would shatter the new statue. Wordlessly, she leaned her forehead down to touch his, shaking from grief.

The stone had its own vibration too; just like the floor, the walls around her, the ceiling above them, the hearts in their chestsâ€¦

Daisy's head snapped up as she heard the faint beat. There it was again! There was her own heart, beating rapidly, and another. And another. Three total; each beating steadily.

Without thinking, Daisy made a shockwave that emanated from her core, shattered the black stone and blowing both Hunter siblings backwards. The stone burst and blew away as dust, while the bodies under it slowly emerged.

All at once, Aria and Liam were free, panting and shaking from the experience. Daisy's heart almost stopped again as she realized what it meant; Liam and Aria Hunter were Inhuman. Just like her.

* * *

><p>"Wow. That'sâ€¦" Coulson was out of words. He'd listened, taken notes, listened some more and finally gave up on remembering it all. The story was shocking in more than one way; Skye was a fearless

agent? With powers? These two siblings had been ruthless fighters as children? And was Hydra really so powerful that they could meet and organize in the open?<p>

"Shocking, I'm sure. You nearly had a heart attack when we were brought in. Aria had trouble flying the jet back; her powers manifested just like everyone else's. It came in waves at stunning intensity. Daisy and I passed out more than once on the trip back." Liam explained, somehow not at all disturbed by this memory. It was as if he were trying to be modest and not make a big deal of it.

"I was there?" Coulson asked, secretly curious as to how he'd turned out.

"You got back from your mission at the same time we landed in the hangar. Joey and Lincoln, don't ask, were beyond surprised when they heard Commander Johnson had turned two more Inhumans. After we lost Yo-Yo… She'd wanted no part in future converts."

"I'm sorry, Yo-Yo?"

"Longer story that's not important. Inhumans are everywhere; interspersed with the population. Crystals designed by the Kree are also pretty common, unfortunately. Humans are killed by them and Inhumans are turned. You're not an Inhuman, if you're wondering. You lost a hand after figuring that out." Liam added with a smile.

"Hmm. Interesting. So you and your sister had powers, and Skye was in charge of training you?" Coulson asked, shaking his head as he tried to make sense of it.

"Commander Johnson. She hated the name Skye. You always had a hard time with it. But yes, that's what happened. After we lost Joey and Lincoln, Johnson became darker. More sinister, more grueling with training, more convinced that my sister and I were mistakes. We learned the hard way how to control our powers."

"That's why when you cuffed Skye earlier you referred to her as ma'am." Coulson realized.

"Force of habit. She drilled us like we were Marines in boot camp. Aria hated it; she always went to complain to Simmons after our daily exercises. I didn't mind it; I'd read so many stories and heard so many legends about _the_ Daisy Johnson I was just glad to be close to her." Liam admitted.

"Do I detect a crush, Mr. Hunter?" Coulson asked suspiciously.

"Agent Hunter. And no. In my timeline she was nearing sixty. I'm not sure if it was admiration, attraction, or just plain fear. Seeing her now, with a totally different personality and a barely recognizable appearance is… odd."

"I guess we're all a little different, to you."

Liam laughed and shook his head, looking up at the camera over his shoulder.

"You have no idea."

Before Coulson could ask another question, the door burst open and Aria stuck her head in.

"Liam? Problem!"

"What is it?" He stood up to block Coulson and hold the door open, already worried.

"I hacked Insight and got a location. Guess where the first gunship is?" Aria looked terrified, which scared Liam all the more.

"Whereâ€¦?"

"Half mile out. She'll be in firing range any second. Turns out dead Hydra agents still have DNA!"

Liam's heart sank as he turned to Coulson.

"Evacuate this boat now! Get everyone onto the bus, onto planes, onto anything you can! Now!" The siblings were already running as Coulson and his team followed along in confusion.

"What's going on?" May demanded as they sprinted past her.

"Insight! We programmed it to target Hydra!" Liam shouted as they hit ran past Lola on the ramp.

"So what? They're allâ€¦" Fitz, stepping out from the lab with Simmons beside him, stopped midsentence as it hit him.

"Right beneath our feet!" Aria finished.

* * *

><p>It took two minutes to convince Gonzales to evacuate the Iliad; two minutes longer than they had. Insight gunships were slow, but they moved steadily. Liam and Aria expected to be blown away as each Quin-jet lifted off, carrying agents and technicians away at top speed.<p>

"You really threatened to sink the ship yourself?" Aria asked as they searched for Bobbi in the crowd of people heading for the bus.

"I threatened to do a lot worse if he didn't at least order mom and Uncle Mac onto the bus." Liam admitted. They waited by the ramp as people piled onboard. Gonzales was one of the last, still limping after an injury to his leg.

"You'd better be right about this. And if you are, we're going to have another long chat." Gonzales promised. Liam shrugged off the threat and ushered him onboard, focusing more on agent Morse, standing nearby.

"I didn't expect her to be soâ€¦" Aria said quietly, staring at her as well.

"Young?" Liam suggested. They were technically older than her, at this point.

"Beautiful." Aria finished. She stared Bobbi until the other woman somehow sensed them. She tried to smile back at them, but quickly turned back to Mac, obviously unnerved.

"I think we're scaring her." Liam observed.

"Liam?"

"Yeah?" He was still staring at Bobbi, who was suddenly lit with a strange, orange light.

"Liam!"

"What?" He turned around to see what she was staring at and his jaw dropped open.

A cloud of smoke and fire was swirling around a few yards away. One of the departing jets had to swerve around it as the ball grew larger and larger, sending waves of heat out at them.

"Is thatâ€¦?"

"Get inside, now!" Liam ordered, stepping closer to ball of light.

"Screw that. Coulson! Get this thing off the ground!" Aria shouted the order inside the bus and hit the switch to raise the ramp.

The swirling ball of fire seemed to pulse, as if it had a heartbeat. The last of the jets took off, and the bus slowly started to rise. Aria and Liam stood shoulder to shoulder, watching the ball form.

"If that was meant for usâ€¦?"

"We'd have been sucked in already. This is outgoing." Liam finished. He set his jaw as it slowly dawned on him who would be stupid enough to follow them.

The ball suddenly collapsed, fires died and the heat was sucked back in like a breath. The wind stilled and the sunlight around them seemed to retreat, as if the portal were some foul creature.

When the fireball faded, a lone figure stood on the deck, kneeling down on the asphalt. Liam and Aria both took fighting stances as the bus circled around, giving the cockpit a good view of the spectacle.

Coulson and Gonzales crowded into the room to get a good look as the three figures stared at each other far below them.

"Another one? How many more are coming?" Gonzales demanded.

"I don't think they were expecting this one." Coulson said slowly. As they watched, the newcomer stood up, and the gunship high above them came into position.

"Noah. What are you doing here?"

8. Chapter 8

* * *

><p>The man slowly rose to his feet. Black, charred skin covered his face and hands. Black tactical armor protected his body, while a pair of familiar looking sunglasses covered his eyes.<p>

Aria had spoken out of fear; Liam was too shocked to speak at all.

"Iâ€¦ I came to find you guys!" Noah smiled.

"Noah, you shouldn't be here!" Aria said firmly, trying to keep the fear out of her voice. Liam flexed his fingers and braced himself for an attack.

"What? Why not? You're here!" Noah objected, pointing a finger at them childishly.

"We're on a mission, Noah, and that mission is over!" Aria went on, taking a step closer to him. Liam moved behind her as she went. They weren't telepathic, but when it came to combat, they might as well have been. Wordlessly they formulated and enacted their plan.

"I just want to help! We can do this together!" Noah grinned, deactivating his glasses. His eyes glinted with their own insane light.

"Noah, you're sick! You need help, let us help you!" Aria said gently. She was no more than a few feet away from him now; the heat radiating off of him was almost unbearable.

"No! I don't need help!" Noah shouted, suddenly furious. He lashed out at Aria with one arm, swinging wide at her head.

She ducked and rolled to her left. Liam jumped over her, and the spout of flame now shooting out of Noah's arm, and landed beside him. Aria rolled to her feet behind Noah, and they both attacked at once.

Liam punched Noah's side with enough force to shake the deck under their feet; Aria grabbed his temples in both of her hands and concentrated, sending a wave of agony through his body. Her skin was seared, but Noah was hit hard as well.

Noah grunted in pain and sent a blast wave of heat out from his core. Aria and Liam were both blown clear, landing hard as the flames died down. The siblings locked eyes as they realized how much trouble they were in. Noah was just getting warmed up.

* * *

><p>"What is that thing?" Gonzales asked softly, staring in wonder at the Inhuman far below them. The bus was still hovering nearby, safely out of the crossfire.<p>

"Coulson! We've got artillery fire coming in!" May suddenly shouted, throwing the bus hard to the starboard side.

Dozens of yellow and red lights suddenly came out of no where, aiming straight for the Iliad. Explosions rocked the ship as the Insight gunship fired again and again. Gaping holes appeared in the sides of the hull, and fires started all over the ship.

On deck, Liam and Aria felt the shock and smelled the smoke. They knew that the Iliad was going down, but Noah seemed too out of it to notice.

"I just want to help!" Noah screamed and a stream of fire came out of his mouth, burning the asphalt in front of Liam to a crisp. He rolled out of the way at the last second, reaching for his Icer as he went. He bit back a cuss word as he realized he didn't have it; S.H.I.E.L.D. had taken it again after the battle.

"You're not helping, Noah, as usual! You're hurting everyone and everything around you!" Liam shouted back. He jumped to his feet and ran straight for him.

Noah spun around and whipped his arms out, sending a whirlwind of fire straight towards Liam. He ducked out of the way as Aria ran in behind Noah again.

She projected a wave of pain out so intense, the aftershock sent Liam reeling. But Noah barely felt it as she stood face to face with him, focusing all her rage onto that one target. Noah was past pain; his charred nerves barely felt it. He kicked her backwards with a flaming boot, and she was sent rolling across the tilted deck.

Water had poured in the new holes, and Insight wasn't done yet. It kept firing, missing the bus by feet and ripping into the Iliad mercilessly. The entire ship tilted to one side, with the three Inhumans still battling it out on the flight deck.

"Aria! Now!" Liam punched the deck and shattered the already melted metal, creating a gaping hole that sucked Noah in. He fell out of sight instantly, and Liam was already running.

He scooped up Aria with one arm and she clung to his back. He spun around and ran in the opposite direction, uphill towards the high end of the ship.

* * *

><p>"He's going to jump! Bring us around so we can catch him!" Coulson ordered. May swung the huge plan around, and the engines whined under the pressure. Coulson was already running, headed for the garage below them. He fairly slid down the stairs and punched the panel to open the massive door.<p>

The insane tilt of the ship, the heat rising from the burning vessel, and the still-firing gunship above them made the bus shake and rattle as May forced it down. The ramp slowly lowered, and as soon as

Coulson could see daylight, two figures flew into the garage beside him.

"Go! Go now!" Liam shouted, sinking to one knee as he landed. Aria slid off of his back, and Coulson shut the door again.

May pulled the bus up at the last second as the Iliad slowly sank beneath the waves. The Insight gunship far above them continued firing until she was completely under before lazily drifting away. The crew onboard had watched in horror as the computer overrode their commands, following through on a mission Liam and Aria had programmed into it. Its engines fired again, and it soared off for England.

* * *

><p>"What on earth was that?" Gonzales shouted, banging his crutch against the metal floor.<p>

Liam and Aria were in the interrogation room, sitting side by side as Coulson and Gonzales glared down at them.

"Be more specific." Liam said coldly. He was holding a rough bandage to his shoulder where he'd been scorched earlier.

"My ship was just destroyed by one of our own carriers! There was priceless cargo onboard, now gone forever!" Gonzales shouted.

"Good. You didn't want that space rock anywayâ€¦" Aria said under her breath. Gonzales shot her a look as Coulson stepped between them.

"Let's take this down a notch. You were in the middle of telling me about your past when you both ordered the evacuation of the Iliad. You somehow knew Insight was coming?" Coulson demanded.

"Yes. We programmed it to come." Liam answered, taking a deep breath. "It was supposed to kill Hydra. It did. _That's_ why we came back. _That's_ why we had to attack the Triskelion. We knew the only way to hack into Insight and stop the next thirty years from happening was to take control."

"Hydra is now an endangered species. You're welcome." Aria snapped.

"You what? You _hacked_ Insight?" Gonzales asked, shock and awe in his voice. Aria smiled and laughed in response.

"I learned from the best."

"All to attack Hydra. You travelled through time, attacked the Triskelion, defended an aircraft carrier and stole Insight, all to attack Hydra." Coulson said, as if not believing the words.

"No. We did it to destroy Hydra." Liam said darkly. "We know what they can do. We've seen it first hand. By this time tomorrow, the entire Hydra organization will be eliminated. A master list of its operatives was stolen in our timeline and loaded into Insight. They'll go down this list systematically and kill every last agent on Earth."

"And then? Why do I think there's going to be another part to this plot?" Coulson asked suspiciously.

"Then they'll warn their crews to evacuate, and collide in midair. They'll destroy themselves somewhere over the North Pole. We know from experience, the Arctic sucks." Aria finished.

Gonzales and Coulson both looked astonished at the ease that the two siblings told the story. As if hacking S.H.I.E.L.D. and destroying Hydra was all in a days work for them.

"There was a flaw in your plan. You were onboard when the Iliad went down." Coulson pointed out.

"No there wasn't. Our being on the Iliad wasn't part of the plan; it was our personal mission. We wanted to get Agents Morse and Mackenzie off before the ship was blown apart. We didn't realize Insight would be here so fast." Liam explained.

"So what about the other traveler? Were you expecting company, or was that a mistake too?" Gonzales asked.

"Noah wasâ€¦ the definition of a mistake." Liam said gravely.

"He was _never_ supposed to be here. I don't know how he managed it, but he somehow came through the portal just like we did. If he's here, we have a problem." Aria sounded serious, concerned, and almost frightened. It was the first time either Coulson or Gonzales had seen this side of her.

"He's dead. That carrier is now at the bottom of the ocean." Gonzales reminded her.

Both Hunter siblings laughed cruelly. "If only it was that simple."

"Excuse me?"

"Noah can fly. He can absorb heat like I absorb kinetic energy. He's malicious, sadistic, and certifiably insane. Until you're looking at his corpse, assume he's still around and plotting mass murder." Liam warned.

"I think you need to back up and start from the beginning. Who or what is Noah?" Coulson demanded.

"We're on our way to the Triskelion, right? To Fury? Wait until we arrive. I don't want to tell this story more than once and he'll want to hear it." Liam looked at each man in turn, trying to decide how much help they were going to be. Coulson seemed open to the idea that Liam wasn't full of it. Gonzales was still upset about the loss of his ship and was totally unreadable.

"We'll be there in five minutes. You'll brief us on this new threat, and then we're locking you away in the deepest, darkest hole we can find." Gonzales promised.

"That's a little harsh. We did you a favor!" Aria snapped, rising from her seat.

Liam stood up too, but for the purpose of holding her back.

"We'll discuss that too. For now, stay here and try not to blow anything else up." Coulson forcefully guided Gonzales out of the room, and they locked the door behind them.

Aria groaned and punched the table as soon as they were gone. Liam felt like doing the same, but contented himself with ripping off the last of the gauze and pulling his shirt back over his shoulder.

"He's going to kill someone." Aria said under her breath.

"Noah? No doubt."

"It's our fault."

"No doubt."

* * *

><p>The bus and its flock of Quin-jets soon arrived at the Triskelion, and were immediately unloaded. The surviving crew of the Iliad was now thoroughly traumatized. Agent Morse and Mac tried to keep people calm, but most were too scared or confused to do much besides demand answers.<p>

Morse was shocked to see Liam and Aria led out in handcuffs again; this time with a squad of armed agents watching them. She had no idea what had changed, and was somehow concerned for them. She didn't remember giving birth to these children of hers, but they still looked at her like she was their mother. That was hard to ignore.

"Agent Coulson; what's going on? What happened back there?" Morse asked Agent Coulson as he passed. Coulson shrugged and shook his head.

"I'll let you know when I figure that out. You're Agent Morse, right?" He asked, turning to get a better look at her.

"Yes sir."

"Stick around. I have a feeling we're going to need you."

* * *

><p>Agents Coulson and Gonzales were sitting in Director Fury's office with Liam and Aria sitting across from them.<p>

Coulson was still curious and trying to figure out what the siblings were up to. Gonzales wanted to see them hanged. Fury was somewhere in between.

"So. You hacked Insight." Fury asked, slapping a hand on his knee dramatically.

"Yes." Liam answered simply. They were still handcuffed, but Liam was out of juice. He couldn't break free this time.

"And you have control of them."

"Yes and no." Aria said slowly, gesturing as if she were unsure.

"And you're not going to give us control of them."

"No." They both said firmly.

Fury nodded and puckered his lips, looking to Coulson and Gonzales questioningly.

"They always liked this?"

"Yes." They both said in unison. Fury sighed and ran a hand over the top of his head.

"Look. You two are, let me put it delicately, screwed." Liam smiled a little as Fury went on. "You are locked up, cornered, and being hunted by a man that managed to scare _me_. You don't have an options left."

"If I may speak?" Aria asked sarcastically. "Same to you."

Fury looked insulted, and Aria quickly explained. "You just lost half of your agency, you have _thousands_ of 'murders' pinned to your name, and you lost a ship carrying valuable cargo you _just_ finished stealing from NASA. You have no idea how to stop this threat and you need the information we have. So stop posturing and lets get to work."

Liam grinned this time and held up his cuffed hand. Aria give him a high-five without breaking eye contact with Fury.

"Okay. So we understand each other." Fury stood up and took a step closer to the two.

"I don't like you. I don't want you anywhere near S.H.I.E.L.D. But as you said, I need you." He turned to Coulson and Gonzales as he spoke. "Agent Coulson says you can be trusted. Gonzales says you can be executed. I think I'll split the difference. You two are going to hunt down this 'Noah' figure with Coulson's team. When you're done, Gonzales is lock you up in his personal dungeon and we're going to Index you. But for now, you're going to tell us everything you know about Noah. Clear?" Fury asked forcefully.

"Let me make something clear to you, Director." Liam said in the same tone. He too rose to his feet, and the two security guards at the door tensed up.

"We aren't supposed to be alive. We do not exist. Our mission was completed and our future has been secured. I am more than happy to be lost and forgotten right now. You could Tahiti me and have me working in a fast food joint in under a week." Liam said unflinchingly.

"But I will not see the same happen to my sister, or my mother; Agent Morse. I'm going to help you take down Noah. He's dangerous, and he needs to be put down."

Fury nodded, almost respectfully, and sat down again.

"Tell us about Noah."

* * *

><p>Super powers weren't what they were cracked up to be. There was
no 'on and off' switch. They were there; pulsating, in the back of
your head. Always watching, always waiting. Like suddenly growing a
third arm that constantly carried a gun and maintained a
trigger-happy finger.<p>

It took Liam days relearn how to walk. His spine and legs worked
fine, but that step into space hurt. Kinetic energy was generated,
although minutely, each time his foot hit concrete. That kinetic
energy was stored, which stretched a 'muscle' Liam had just recently
grown.

The first time someone touched him he squirmed in pain. The first
time he took a step he bit his tongue so hard it bled. Walking to the
Quin-jet almost ruined him. But eventually, the muscle grew and
strengthened. It took time and effort, but soon Liam could walk
again.

Aria's road was easier; once she managed to turn down her power,
people could be in the same room with her again. She generated a
strange form of inaudible sound naturally, even when silent. That
sound reacted poorly with the brain matter of normal people, which
caused intense pain in select areas. At first, Aria had two settings.
Agony and soreness. Over time she developed a few new settings for
her weapon.

So when a man came along who _wanted_ what they had, they thought he
was crazy. Noah Baxter was a normal guy in a normal life with normal
goals. He'd volunteered for S.H.I.E.L.D. after a strange incident
involving a Hydra hit on a police station. He was a junior officer
and the only surviving member of his precinct.

Horrible as it was, Liam thought it would have been better if he'd
died with the rest of them. Carving a name on a stone is easier than
deciding what to do, where to go, how to hide this man who'd been
thrown in their laps.

Fitz and Simmons encouraged the now twenty and twenty one year old
siblings to befriend the man. He was a couple of years older than
Aria and soon developed a massive crush on her.

Neither Liam nor Aria could put their fingers on it; Noah was just…
off. Granted, they had no friends their age. Literally everyone in
S.H.I.E.L.D. was older than them and acted it. So when a new guy came
along who wanted so desperately to be what they were, it was
new.

Noah was young, innocent, eager to please, and an average guy. None
of these things are wanted in S.H.I.E.L.D. agents. But he was a new
recruit, and no one had a good reason to say no. Liam and Aria had
discussed setting their time portal to the day they'd met Noah; the
idea received more consideration than the observer would believe. But
technical glitches forced them to set their sights earlier. Whatever;
in Liam's mind, Noah would end up being someone else's
problem.

There wasn't anything wrong with Noah. At first. But soon, things changed.

"Hey guys! Where are you headed?" Noah asked, running to catch up with them in the hallway. Liam and Aria both rolled their eyes before responding. _Away from you_, they both thought.

Noah was short, thin, brown haired and brown eyed. He had pale skin that burned before it tanned and slightly crooked teeth that seemed to jump out at people more than it should have. His eyes were larger than normal, and always seemed to be begging something of someone.

"No where. Just out and about." Liam tried to say cordially.

"Awesome, can I come?"

And therein laid their problem. Neither one of them had a good reason to say no. Noah was clingy, and like most clingy people, he forced Liam and Aria to be rude before he took a hint.

"Uh, sure. Why not?" Aria put no emphasis on the last words, as if to say, 'Why come at all?'

"Cool! You guys are awesome! Thanks for letting me tag along! Where are we going? Hydra outpost? Supply depot? Secret base?" Noah asked, each question coming fractions of a second after the previous.

"Nope, just out. For some fresh air." Liam answered. Another problem; Aria and Liam liked to sneak out every now and again, just for fun. See the city, smell the air, break a dozen rules for the heck of it. Casually, without any formality. But Noah drew attention to them, made them question their reasons for going out in the first place, and ended up forcing them to come back sooner than necessary.

"Okay, cool! You know I heard one of the agents saying that the air quality keeps falling; like Hydra is polluting the air somehow! Should we check that out? Or should weâ€¦"

He kept going, and going, all the way to the elevator while Aria and Liam tuned him out.

"Nope, just out. For some fresh air." Liam repeated. He found himself doing that a lot around Noah; like the guy was so wrapped up in his own motor-mouth that he forgot they'd already answered his question.

"Cool. Hey, shouldn't we be armed? I guess not; you guys _are_ the weapons!" Noah grinned. He scooted into the elevator too and stood far too close to Aria, as usual.

"We're just heading out to a restaurant nearby. The owner knows us and knows not to make a big deal of us being there." They'd actually been planning to go much, much farther, but with Noah in tow, options were limited.

"Cool! Is it Mexican, or Chinese, or Japaneseâ€¦ Hey what's the

difference between Chinese and Japanese? Do they both have chopsticks, or is that Korean? I used to go to this place, back when I was a copâ€¦"

Aria and Liam both moved their lips in synch around the words 'back when I was a cop'. It was Noah's favorite phrase.

"And then the waiter is like 'No, the tip is _six_ percent!' What an idiot, right? Anyway, this girl comes over to my table, smoking hot, but I've seen hotterâ€¦" He made a point of looking at Aria here, who smiled politely.

They both knew there was no hot girl. For one, Noah physically repelled female humans. For another, Noah was a pathological liar.

"Noah, could you wait here for a minute?" Aria suddenly asked as they hit the surface. They were in an old warehouse that S.H.I.E.L.D. used to cover the top of their base. Liam raised an eyebrow, but Noah obediently stopped and waited right where he was.

"Thanks; we'll be back in a sec." Aria grabbed Liam and they both ran off, laughing as soon as they were out of earshot.

"We just ditched him, didn't we?" Liam asked, his conscience kicking him in the teeth.

"Relax! He's always telling us lies about those 'adventures' back when he was a cop; let him actually go have one. He's S.H.I.E.L.D. for crap's sake; he doesn't need to be coddled!"

What they didn't know at the time was Noah hadn't waited. He'd followed them, silently, like a grade 'A' creeper. He heard the entire conversation, and sat fuming as they ran off into the darkened city.

9. Chapter 9

DISCLAIMER: I do not now, nor have I ever, owned the characters and settings of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. I own only the characters I myself have created. Any views, opinions, or beliefs of these characters does not necessarily reflect the views, opinions or beliefs of myself.

* * *

><p>"This is the future super villain that travelled across time to kick your butt?" Fury asked skeptically. Coulson and Gonzales both looked a little skeptical themselves.<p>

"Haven't you ever heard about those guys in high-school that are so quiet no one remembers them? The same guys that show up to the reunion packing an AK and a vengeance?" Aria demanded.

"Noah was that guy." Liam finished.

"So I'm seeing a potential stalker with a S.H.I.E.L.D. issue weapon. How does that turn into what we saw on the Iliad?" Coulson asked. Gonzales remained silent and judging.

"One night it all hits the fan. We go too far out, he goes too far in. Collision of worlds and one of the worst nights of my life." Aria said slowly.

"Sounds dramatic." Fury noted.

"It was."

* * *

><p>Liam and Aria had just gotten back from another excursion. This time to a club; neither of them drank, but it was fun messing with people who did. Liam had hit on a girl, Aria had laughed at his feeble attempt, and she ended up with a huge crowd of men following her like loyal lapdogs. It then turned into a brawl, and they had to fight their way out. No one believed that they were siblings; they were too close in age.<p>

They were laughing as they got off the elevator and stepped in S.H.I.E.L.D. headquarters. They stopped laughing when they rounded the corner to the bunkrooms.

Noah was sitting on a staircase, arms on his knees, head hanging low. A feeling of dread and horror somehow emanated from him as he sat there silently, staring at the floor. When he spoke, it sounded like a ghost.

"What's wrong with me?" He asked simply. He looked up at Aria and Liam with bloodshot, tear filled eyes. To see a grown man crying on a staircase was disturbing. Realizing you were completely alone with said man was even more so.

"What did I do wrong that you hate me?"

Liam didn't know how to respond and frankly, didn't care to. He was ready to bolt and convince Coulson to have the guy thrown out. But Aria answered him, unfortunately.

"Nothing is wrong with you, Noah! You're just… Needy. You're normal, average, and a good kind of guy. We aren't. We're weird, we're antisocial, we're introverted, there's a hundred things wrong with us. We don't want to hurt you, but you've got to get it through your head that we aren't going to be friends!"

Months of tension came pouring out of her, and she didn't hold back. Liam almost stopped her as he saw the look on Noah's face.

"It's not you, it's me? Really?" Noah asked. He stood up and started shaking his head, stuttering the whole time.

"Leo said you wouldn't say this. He said you were good people." Another one of Noah's annoying habits; he called everyone by their first name, as if that would somehow make him friends with everyone. It mostly just annoyed people.

"I disagreed. We argued… and I Iced him…" As he was walking, he locked one of the bunkroom doors. Liam was caught up on that last part; Aria looked stunned.

"What?"

"And then Jemma came inâ€¦ she wouldn't stop screamingâ€¦ I had to Ice her tooâ€¦" He locked another door. He was moving closer to them, and the siblings moved out of his way. They were in the center of the room now, with Noah slowly circling them, locking all of the exits.

"Daisy was on missionâ€¦ She won't be back for hours. Joey and Lincoln, too. Even took Mac. I wasn't invited." Another door locked. This time, there was thumping on the other side.

"That's Philâ€¦ tranquilizer in his tea didn't go wellâ€¦" Noah was talking like he was in the grocery store, trying to remember a shopping list. It was terrifying.

"And that just leaves Lance. He wasn't drunk today; of all the days to go soberâ€¦ I had to hit him really, really hardâ€¦" Noah complained. He was done locking doors now. He turned to face them, and they both nearly jumped out of their skins as he spoke.

"I just want to be like you, Liam. I just want to love you, Aria. What's _wrong with me?_"

He did a lot of things at once. He yelled, at the top of his lungs. He pressed a hidden command on the phone in his pocket. The lights all died at once. And he tackled Liam to the ground.

In the dark, it was a madhouse. Aria screamed again and again, scared to use her powers on the chance they'd hit Liam. Liam didn't speak; there was only muffled grunting. Aria was horrified when she heard a body hit the floor, and Noah start to pant.

"â€¦Ariaâ€¦ come here!"

She bolted through the darkened room, slamming herself against a door as hard as she could.

"Aria! I'm not going to hurt you!"

"Stay away from me!"

Footsteps echoed on the concrete floor.

"Ariaâ€¦"

She fumbled with the lock, her fingers suddenly numb in shock and fear. She finally threw the door opened and sprinted into the next pitch-black hallway.

"Ariaâ€¦"

Noah was right behind her. She could hear the sounds of his boots on the floor. Hear him panting. Hear the sounds of her own heartbeat as she ran through the dark.

"Ariaâ€¦"

* * *

><p>Aria stopped talking, and Liam put a hand on her shoulder. She still looked disturbed at the memory, even years later.<p>

"Then what happened?" Gonzales asked callously. Liam started to answer angrily, but Aria finished her own story.

"Then? The brave, fearless Aria Hunter, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. and Inhuman of Earth, hid. In a closet. I was so scared I couldn't use my powers and I couldn't think straight. Daisy's team landed an hour later and found the base in chaos. We turned on all the lights, I told them what had happened, and we found Liam." She bit her lip and fairly shook as she remembered the scene. "He was unconscious, lying in his bunk. Noah had dragged him there after tranquilizing him and taking a syringe of his blood."

"He wanted it to replicate my powers. Noah Baxter isn't an Inhuman; he's an abomination. He wanted to take my powers, but his DNA didn't work well with my gene. He got the ability to absorb, store, and redirect thermal energy, instead of kinetic. He got all the power and none of the control. He can walk into a forest fire and put it out before starting an inferno in a hospital. And he _has_ done that before." Liam explained.

"He's our fault. Not a day goes by that I don't think about the 'what if's. What if we'd been nicer to him. What if we'd put up with him. What if we'd taken out heads out of our butts long enough to seeâ€¦" Aria shook her head and stared out the window.

"Noah is our fault. He's after us, and us only. He still thinks he's in love with Aria, and he still wants to become me. He'll stop at nothing to obtain that goal. Before that night when Noah lost it, we'd been half-way agents. After that, Daisy wouldn't let us out of her sight. Where we went, she went, and where she went, we went. No exceptions. We became agents that night because of Noah."

"Interesting story." Gonzales said neutrally. "Doesn't justify half of what you've taken upon yourself to do."

Liam's head snapped up and he stood up to face the other man. "We don't _need_ justification; especially not from you! When you've watched your home burn and your family die, you can talk to _me_ about justification! Our world is in chaos and S.H.I.E.L.D. is dead. That fact that this isn't true means you owe us." Liam snarled. "Yes. We killed 'your' agents. Yes, we're responsible for Insight going rogue and the deaths of thousands. Yes, we sank your ship and your pretty little rock in the cargo hold. And I am truly sorry that I just don't give a rat's-"

Liam was interrupted when Maria Hill walked into the room, carrying her usual tablet.

The tension in the room was tangible. Gonzales looked ready to hang Liam again, Coulson looked like a scared spectator, and Fury welcomed her in.

"Agent Hill. What's the situation?"

"I've been tracking the disturbances you had me looking for and I've found a pattern." Hill set her tablet on the desk and brought up a

map. Three points were highlighted in red; one was almost in orbit, high in the atmosphere. The other was literally at sea level, while the third was back in the air.

"The first point, here, is where they came in." Hill explained. "The second is where this 'Noah' figure emerged." She pointed at the sea level point. "And the third is where the next portal should be."

Liam and Aria looked shocked, while the other three seemed pleased.

"You can track where they'll open?" Coulson asked, leaning over to get a better look at the tablet.

"Yes and no. This is where the portal should be next; whether it's incoming or outgoing is questionable. We've had minor disturbances that didn't create a full portal all along this line." Hilly explained. There was a somewhat straight line running through each portal location.

"That's not possible; Fitzsimmons said that this was a one way shot. One location; one exit, one entrance!" Liam said firmly.

"Fitzsimmons was wrong." Hill stated simply.

"Or Noah screwed us, again." Aria suggested. "If he forced it open trying to follow us…"

"Talk about a coincidence!" Liam snorted.

"Maybe, maybe not. That monolith is what the time-portal tech is based on."

"Well it's now at the bottom of the ocean!"

"Pattern's formed; it has to followed. It almost makes sense to me." Aria summed up.

"That makes one of us." Coulson said with a raised eyebrow.

Fury looked back and forth between the tablet and the two siblings, narrowing his eye as he did. "Tell me no one else is coming through that portal."

"Five hours ago I'd swear to it. Now? I don't know." Liam said honestly.

"Who else _is_ on the other side of that portal? Is S.H.I.E.L.D. still around?" Coulson asked hesitantly.

"If Noah came through…" Aria started to say.

"Then S.H.I.E.L.D. is dead. It's that simple." Liam finished.

"What about Noah? You two know him better than anyone alive. If he really did survive the Iliad, where will he go?" Fury asked. He seemed to be slowly coming around to the two siblings; doing the wrong thing for the right reason was nothing new to him. He'd built

Insight to do exactly this; whether Coulson or Gonzales agreed with it was a different story.

"Someplace dark and elaborate where he can hide. Like a rat in a maze; someplace he could escape from easily." Aria rattled off.

"And someplace only he knows about; why risk S.H.I.E.L.D. or Hydra finding him on their own?" Liam added, sitting back down beside her.

"So someplace dark and creepy that doesn't exist yet, or won't be discovered for a long time." Aria thought out loud, resting her chin on her hand.

Both siblings spoke at once as it hit them. "The Kree temple!"

"The what?"

Liam nodded resolutely and snatched Hill's tablet away as he spoke.

"There's an ancient, underground city and temple built by the Kree, here on earth. It's not supposed to be discovered for a while; close to a year, if I remember my historyâ€¦" Liam brought up a map of Central America and started zooming in on the islands East of it.

"What's inside this Kree temple?" Coulson asked.

"The power to turn humans into Inhumans. The only entrance we know of is here. In Puerto Rico." He turned the tablet around to show the rest of them the map, focusing on an old castle near the shore.

"You're saying there's an alien temple complex under that castle?" Coulson asked skeptically. Fury and Gonzales were still busy studying it while Aria and Liam nodded.

"There was. Is, I guess. It was destroyed before we were born." Aria explained.

"We should take a TN when we go; that place needs to be destroyed." Liam said quietly.

"Agreed, but how are we going to convince them that?" Aria whispered back.

Fury was watching them carefully and raised an eyebrow. "What's a TN and why does this place need to be destroyed?"

"Tactical Nuke. Or any other bomb you can get a hold of. The bigger the better." Aria said, gesturing as to the size of the bomb.

"This temple also tends to mind-control humans. Uncleâ€¦ Agent Mac had a rough time with that. We also suspect it's still tied into some form of communications network." Liam corrected himself as he said 'uncle' and was purposely vague on the rest. Too vague for Aria to catch on.

"Communications network?" She whispered, as if the rest of the people

in the room couldn't hear her.

"Afterlife heard about it." Liam said carefully. Aria grunted and nodded as the idea clicked.

"And you're sure Noah is heading here?" Fury demanded, pointing to the Puerto Rican castle.

"Positive. He's obsessed with Inhumans and this place is sacred to most of them. Add that to the fact it's never been fully mapped or explored, it's dark, and only Inhumans can safely enter, and it's got 'Noah' written all over it." Aria summed up.

Fury thought hard and stared back and forth between the two siblings. Gonzales was staring at them just as hard, but more maliciously. Coulson seemed curious about the temple, while Hill looked to Fury for orders.

"We'll split up and cover both spots. Coulson, have half of your team on your bus take Liam here to the portal location. The rest of your team and any other agents we can spare are going to Puerto Rico. I'll call the local government and get permission to start landing agents and supplies. I want this temple locked down, but not necessarily destroyed, if we can help it. As for that portal, secure any one or anything that decides to come through." He had been looking at Coulson and Hill as he spoke, but not turned back to Liam and Aria.

"As of right now, you work for S.H.I.E.L.D. You follow our orders and you play by our rules. No more secrets, no more plots, no more ulterior motives. Clear?"

Aria started to say something, but Liam quickly cut her off. "Clear. But we're not splitting up. You'll want me there if you're going to take out Noah."

Fury started to laugh, and got a lot closer to Liam before he spoke. "Did I start that sentence with 'if it so please your highness'? You want to stay out of a cell? You follow orders. You and your sister have a tendency to say 'screw it' and do what you want. If you're on opposite ends of the globe, you're less likely to pull any stunts. That's the deal. Take it or leave it."

Aria glanced sideways at Liam, already hearing his objections.

"It's a big temple and I'll have plenty of agents." Aria told him.

"Noah's killed a lot of agents and he'll be looking for you."

"No, he'll be looking for you; and when he can't find you, he'll be confused and distracted. Perfect opportunity to take him out." Aria countered.

"He's insane. He'll kill you." Liam said through gritted teeth.

"He wouldn't hurt me, not on purpose, anyway. Trust me, I can handle him. If not, I'll grab mom and Mac and we'll head for Mexico."

The rest of the agents in the room all turned to look at her as she

suggested that, while Liam finally nodded in acceptance.

"Fine. First sign of trouble, bail. I have a feeling Fitzsimmons will be with me, so that just leaves May, and she can handle herself. Mom and Mac, no one else."

They turned to Fury as they agreed and Liam nodded. "We're in."

* * *

><p>Aria had wanted to fly the Quin-jet, but was told she was lucky to be un-cuffed. She sat in the back, pouting, as another agent flew. Coulson was on the jet with her, as well as Ward. She was flattered; they thought it would take Ward to put her down if she became difficult.<p>

"So. How's it going?" Aria asked amiably. She was sitting down near the back, with Coulson and May standing up near the pilot.

"I'm on a jet flying to Puerto Rico with a wannabe Avenger. How are you?" Coulson shot back.

"We prefer the term 'Inhuman'. The Avengers aren't all they're cracked up to be." Aria said dangerously, knowing it would provoke a response.

"What _did_ happen to the Avengers? I assume they didn't make it if Hydra really did take over." Ward said harshly. He put too much emphasis on 'really did', as if he were still doubting Aria's story.

"Oh Hydra took over; shortly after the Avengers killed each other in a civil war. The government provoked it and Hydra fanned the flames. The only survivor was Thor, who went back to Asgard and swore never to come back." Aria said lazily, as if describing the weather.

"Even Captain Rogers?" Coulson asked hesitantly.

Aria nodded slowly, pretending to examine her nails. "Yep. Agent Thirteen put a bullet in his head. On accident. Long story."

Coulson looked floored while Ward looked annoyed. "You just love making chaos, don't you?"

"What can I say? I'm good at it." Aria grinned wickedly as the jet touched down and the ramp slowly lowered.

Coulson was the first out and took a long look around as the other dozen jets landed. Fury hadn't been kidding; there was an army of S.H.I.E.L.D. here and they were all ready for war.

"We're in a civilian population. Stay close, stay down, and stay quiet. No collateral damage." Ward threatened. Aria bowed ceremoniously.

"You're one to talk…"

Ward shot her a dirty look and kept walking.

10. Chapter 10

* * *

><p>Liam was on the bus, sitting around the 'kitchen' area with Bobbi and Mac watching him carefully. Simmons was down in the lab, running models and scenarios for the portal's opening, while May was in the cockpit. Ward had been sent with Aria and their team. Liam laughed at the thought; if they really wanted to stop Aria, they'd need a lot more than Ward.<p>

"So. I'm married in the future, huh?" Bobbi asked awkwardly.

Liam nodded and pursed his lips, leaning back in his chair.

"Hunter, right?"

"Do you really want to know?" Liam suddenly asked. "It's not going to turn out the same way, now that we're here. It may never happen."

Bobbi nodded and looked to Mac, who was still staring uncomfortably at Liam.

"I still want to know."

"You married Hunter, again, after being captured and tortured by… Hydra." Liam told her, catching himself at the last minute. That technically was Ward, but a Ward twisted and warped by Hydra. Maybe this Ward was different.

"What about me? How do I turn out?" Mac asked solemnly. He sounded like he was asking just out of courtesy; he didn't seem to buy into the time travel just yet.

"You work for another sect of S.H.I.E.L.D. with Bobbi. Turn traitor to Coulson, who'd taken over most of S.H.I.E.L.D. You then rejoin the team and take over as Director yourself a few times, when Coulson goes off the reservation. Your most prized possession is the axe you used to cut off Coulson's hand, which you presented to him as a gift. You were inspired to make the first Shax; a shotgun axe combo."

Mac nodded and thought it over before shrugging. "Sounds like me."

"I'm sorry, cut off Agent Coulson's hand?" Bobbi asked , eyes wide.

Liam laughed. "It saved his life. The same crystals that turn potentials into Inhumans also kill normal humans. Coulson grabbed a crystal to keep it from shattering, and Mac amputated it before it killed him."

"Yeah, sounds like me." Mac repeated.

Bobbi thought for a minute more before asking another question.

"Was Iâ€¦ I mean before I died, was I a decent mother?" She asked hesitantly, blushing slightly.

Liam turned serious and nodded. "The best. I had a mild form of autism, Aria had a rare nerve condition that made her super sensitive to touch. You relearned how to hold her, bought her special clothes that didn't hurt as muchâ€¦ You were planning on quitting S.H.I.E.L.D. and home-schooling the both of us."

"Wow." Bobbi seemed shocked, and absentmindedly played with the baton in her belt.

"My own mom wasn't that great. I always assumed I'd stay on my own."

"When you joined Coulson's team, you joined a family. Being on your own wasn't an option for you, or my sister and I. We tried to run away once; Aria was twelve and I was thirteen. We made it all of a block before Coulson and Mac pulled up in an SUV and threatened to Ice us if we didn't come back with them." Liam laughed at the memory.

"Ice?"

"Stun, basically. Tranquilizer rounds that knock you out cold." Liam un-holstered his own weapon, now that it had been reissued to him, and handed it to Bobbi.

"Impressive. Who whipped this up?" Bobbi asked, holding it gently in her hands as she examined it.

"Fitzsimmons. It completely paralyzes you and knocks you unconscious."

"What about the rest of the team? You're sure that no one else from S.H.I.E.L.D. is alive in the future?" Mac asked as they hit a round of turbulence. Trip was taking them higher and higher, and the bus was bucking like a scared horse.

"If Noah used the portal, they're gone. It's that simple." Liam bit his lip and stared down at the table, trying not to think too hard about it. When they'd arrived, the plan had been to go back. They'd adjusted very quickly to the world of their parents, that place was still home. And it was gone.

"We're approaching the coordinates now!" May yelled. Liam jumped up, followed by Mac and Bobbi.

"Let's get to the bay; Coulson had a fifty caliber gun bolted to the deck." Mac told them as the plane leveled out. The huge engines rotated up until they were at a ninety degree angle with the wings.

The sky was empty as the bus arrived, but Liam opened the bay door anyway. The air started to rush out, and Mac passed around oxygen masks to everyone. Besides Bobbi, Mac, and Liam, a dozen other agents were in the vehicle bay with guns leveled.

"I wonder how close May put usâ€¦" Liam said to himself as the air finished spilling out.

They weren't moving much at all, so once the air pressure equalized, it was like walking in space. The air was cold and thin, but with the masks it was survivable.

"I don't know; is this even the right direction to be looking?" Mac asked, scanning the horizon carefully.

A small red point appeared in the distance. It was tiny, but started growing fast. Liam realized too late that it wasn't in the distance at all; it was right outside the ramp, but too small to see clearly.

"We need to back off, now!" Liam ordered, moving to Bobbi backwards.

She was standing near the start of the ramp, where the SUV used to sit. Something about the red dot had mesmerized her, and Liam had to physically grab and pull her to get her attention.

"Do you hear that?" She asked quietly.

And then it all erupted into chaos. The red dot turned into a raging inferno; flames and heat exploded into the bay. Agents were tossed backwards, and the fifty cal gun was blown off its legs. The entire bus shook as the portal opened _inside_ the bay.

Mac was yelling to everyone as the portal erupted, crawling across the deck as the heat and flames licked at his boots. Suddenly, he could hear his own voice again, and the other agents stopped screaming.

"Bobbi! Liam! What's going on?" He whirled around as some thoughtful agent shut the somewhat melted bay door.

"Bobbi? Liam?" He stood up to get a better look around the room, and his concern turned to panic.

"Bobbi! Liam!"

They were gone.

* * *

><p>Fury got the call in his office, and agent Mackenzie's voice sounded disturbed to the utmost.<p>

"I'm sorry, Director. We were taken completely off guard."

"Tell me another Inhuman didn't come through that portal." Fury begged.

"No sir. In fact, we have one less. Liam Hunter was sucked in, as well as Agent Morse."

"Why one earth were you all so close to it?"

"I don't know, sir. According to our coordinates, we had ten yards of breathing room. Instead, the dang thing opened on top of us. We're still trying to figure out why."

"Did you lose anyone else?"

"No sir. Just Bobbi and Liam." Mac's voice was hard and angry, as if he blamed himself for the incident.

"Tell Agent May to turn around and get back here as soon as possible." Fury hung up the phone and tossed it onto the desk. Agent Gonzales was sitting across from him, almost smugly.

"We lost one of your agents." Fury said needlessly. Mac didn't exactly have a soft, quiet voice.

"I heard."

"We almost lost Coulson's bus, by the sound of it."

"Permission to speak freely, sir." It was more of an announcement than a request.

"You're going to anyway, right?" Fury asked with a sigh.

"How did this fiasco happen in the first place? You sent an unknown asset to secure an unknown anomaly and risked several of my agents in the process. What did you think was going to happen?" Gonzales demanded.

Fury had a decent temper; it took a lot to get him hot under the collar. But the past few days had been enough.

"Did you have a better idea, agent? I had a report on my desk about time-travelling super-villains raining from the sky, and exactly two people on Earth who had any clue why! Yes, I used one of them! Yes, I risked _our_ agents!" Fury shouted.

Gonzales very calmly nodded and watched Fury steam.

"What about the other team?"

Fury sat back down and gestured angrily at the phone.

"They called an hour ago; apparently there's a giant hole in the floor of an ancient castle and our fiery friend is already inside. They're requesting to drop a nuke in the hole and evacuate most of Puerto Rico!"

"But we can't do that, right?" Gonzales asked sincerely. The thought had obviously crossed both their minds before.

"Not at the moment." Fury sighed.

* * *

><p>Aria looked down into the hole of melted concrete and whistled.<p>

"Yep. That's a hole."

"We know that." Ward snapped. He was holding a gun at the ready as a team set up a winch and rope nearby. Coulson was standing beside Ward, watching as the rest of their agents filed in.

"So, when do we drop the nuke? I vote sooner, rather than later." Aria said as she stood up.

"From what you've told us, wouldn't he just absorb the blast?" Coulson asked.

"Yes and no. He certainly wouldn't absorb the falling rock and rushing water, so seriously, let's drop a few in for good measure and head out!" Aria grinned.

Ward and Coulson looked back and forth at each other like tired parents.

"She's like Skye, but with powers." Ward complained.

"And a bigger attitude." Coulson shot back.

As it turned out, Skye and Fitz were only a few seconds away. They walked down the stairs with the rest of the agents, studying the old castle's basement carefully.

"So, is this the spot?" Skye asked as they came to a stop.

"No, we're looking for the _other_ giant hole in the ground leading to ancient alien city!" Aria said sarcastically.

"Excuse me! Maybe we should send you down first to make sure!" Skye snapped angrily.

"Okay, enough." Coulson stepped between them as the winch was locked into place.

"Our first priority is to see if Noah really is down there. If he is, we want to either contain or neutralize his powers. After he's secured, we'll decide what to do with the rest of the temple."

Aria was suddenly serious, and looked down the hole nervously. "I'll go down first. Keep Skye up here, please."

They all turned to look at her, surprised at the sudden change of heart.

"This guy Noah really scares you that much?" Skye asked her. Aria laughed a little and shook her head.

"No. He terrifies me, and more than you can imagine. If you go down there, you'll wish you'd never heard the word 'Inhuman'."

Fitz chose that moment to speak up, setting down the large case he'd been carrying.

"No one has to go down there. Dwarves to the rescueâ€¦" He popped open the lid and tapped a command on his tablet, sending yellow drones shooting into the air.

"Oh wait; I remember something about those!" Aria said in a pained tone, wracking her brain as the Dwarves disappeared into the gaping hole.

"What? I've lost the feedâ€¦" Fitz sputtered, rapidly typing away on his tablet.

"That was it! All electronics are fried when they get close!" Aria suddenly shouted. Fitz sighed and looked incredibly annoyed.

"Excellent timing. That's seven Dwarves, gone forever!" He kicked the now empty case away and looked up Aria questioningly.

"Anything else you forgot to tell us?"

"Don't let your skin touch the floor or you'll turn into a zombie!" Aria said, snapping her fingers.

Fitz threw his hands up into the air and let them fall to his side.

"Brilliant. Bloody brilliant. How exactly are we supposed to go down there, then?"

"Haz-mat suits. We're bringing those in now." Ward answered calmly.

Aria looked down into the hole again, nervously playing with the latch on her holster.

"Plus, Skye and I would be fine. We're not human, so it won't affect us."

"I heard about that. Still not sure I believe it." Skye said with a wry smile.

"Believe it. You're the biggest and baddest of the Inhumans in my timeline." Aria said absentmindedly.

"Okay, that's a little more plausibleâ€¦" Skye joked.

They unloaded the suits, and everyone including Skye climbed into one. No one was willing to risk Aria's memory being wrong again, but Aria refused to wear the rubber outfits.

"No way. If I see Noah, I don't want to be wearing a giant white bull's eye." Aria argued. The white suits would be easily visible in the gloom below them, even in the low light.

Fitz tossed a handful of snapped glow-sticks down the hole ahead of them, and Aria strapped into the harness.

"If you hear screaming, take that as a sign to pull me up." Aria said seriously.

"We'll be right behind you." Coulson said, putting a gloved hand on her shoulder.

"If you want to comfort me, tell me there's a nuke right behind me.

Instantaneous death sounds a lot better than whatever twisted fantasies Noah plans on living out." Aria said through gritted teeth.

The motor whined, the rope strained, and Aria was lowered into the darkness. Her stomach did a somersault as the last of the light above died and the ominous dark greeted her.

The line lowered on and on, the glow sticks below coming closer and closer. Aria hit the stone floor lightly, and quickly unhooked herself from the harness. As soon as she was standing solidly on the floor, she sent out a wave of pain in a three hundred and sixty degree arc. It would have been enough to drop an elephant; she hoped enough to make Noah yell or scream. But there was only silence.

She heard the whine of ropes straining, and in a second another agent in a white suit was beside her.

"Hey; see anything?" Skye's voice came through the plastic mask, and Aria was surprised she'd come down so quickly.

"Nothing yet."

They both jumped as they heard screaming; not from around them, but _above_ them.

"Skye! Aria! He's up here!" Coulson yelled over the radio. There was a lot of noise and static, and then a flaming winch was thrown down the hole in front of them. The radio died.

"We need to go!" Aria grabbed Skye's arm and pulled her away, into the darkness.

* * *

><p>Wind was the first thing Liam was aware of. Wind, shouting and whistling in his ear. He opened his eyes to see bright sunshine and blue sky. A lot of sky, actually. He was falling through the air.<p>

He panicked as he realized what had happened; he had been sucked through to the other side. He was home, and falling out of the sky. He maneuvered himself around so he was facing the ground; the air whipped at him as he scanned the sky around him. Had anyone else been sucked through?

His unspoken question was answered as he spotted a streak of blonde hair and black armor, falling right beside him! He reached out a hand and angled his body forward, shooting towards her.

"Hold on to me!" Liam shouted over the wind, pulling Morse into a tight hug. He rolled over again, onto his back, and forced her onto his stomach. She curled up into a tight ball and gripped his armor tightly as they both plummeted.

There was no time or reason to speak; they both sat silently as the ground approached at insane speeds. Liam prepared his mind and body for the impact; if he wasn't concentrating hard enough, they'd both be a stain in the inside of a minute.

But there was a small mercy; they weren't falling straight down. They were shooting across the sky, like a comet entering the atmosphere. There was hardly any air for them to breathe, which only served to panic them more. Instead of landing in the Atlantic Ocean, they'd be landing near the east coast; unfortunately, at much higher speeds.

They fell and fell, the sound of wind rushing past them soon becoming monotonous. Stress and pressure were the only things keeping Liam focused; the chaotic fall was maddening to experience.

Finally, they approached the coastline.

"I see buildings!" Morse shouted, holding on even tighter.

"Good!" Liam answered, not daring to turn around and look. Buildings meant layers of material to break their fall, instead of solid asphalt to pulverize them.

Before Liam could ask how close they were, glass shattered behind him. He'd done his best to absorb most of the energy, so instead of vaporizing the glass and the building behind it, the odd couple flew through the window and into the office space beyond.

They gripped each other tightly as Liam slid to a stop against a pillar, his body aching with the absorbed energy.

"Get off…" Liam growled, trying to roll out from under her.

"Are you okay? What just happened? Where are we?" Bobbi looked around at the abandoned office as Liam crawled a short distance away. She wasn't watching as he place his hand on a desk and released most of his tension.

She whirled around as the desk flew out another window and shot into the distance, landing miles away. Liam collapsed to the floor again, panting and shaking.

"Oh my… Are you okay?" She asked again, kneeling beside him.

"Will be… Give me a minute…" Liam panted.

Bobbi stood up and looked around again, her mind racing as she studied their landing site. It was an office, but a deserted office. Computers and desks were everywhere, old carpet and cheap lights completed the room. They were high up in a skyscraper; at least the twentieth floor.

"Where are we?" She asked again.

"Wrong question." Liam slowly rolled to his feet, wincing in pain as his muscles were forced into action. "_When_ are we, would work better…"

"We were headed at an angle for some kind of coastline; I can't tell if we're in North America or England." Bobbi said, pulling out her batons. She twirled them nervously as she walked around, taking in the sights.

Liam glanced at a keyboard lying on the floor. "North America."

"How can you tell?"

"British keyboards look different. Simmons gave me a lecture on it once." Liam leaned heavily against one of the pillars and looked around with her, trying to focus his eyes.

"I see fast food restaurants, apartment buildings, a park…" Bobbi listed, scanning the horizon carefully.

"And no people." Liam finished. Bobbi jumped a little as she realized he was right.

"What…? No cars, no pedestrians, no planes… Where are we?"

"Manhattan. It's completely abandoned. We had an old base somewhere around here; we should head there first." Liam made his way to the stairwell a ways off to their right, with Bobbi slowly following him.

"Why is Manhattan abandoned?"

"Because there's no people left."

Bobbi smiled dangerously and shook her head. "Really? You don't say! _Why_ aren't there any people here?"

"The survivors left. Most were wiped out by Hydra." Liam said coldly. Bobbi stopped as he blew a door off its hinges, revealing the stairs behind them.

"How did that happen?" Bobbi asked, referring to the city.

"War. S.H.I.E.L.D. stood up to Hydra. Lost a lot of men. The citizens rallied around us and were slaughtered like sheep. The survivors left and didn't come back."

They both descended the concrete steps slowly and carefully, with Liam holding his side and trying not to appear any weaker than he already did. He was in no shape to fight, and he had the sinking suspicious a fight was coming.

"That's horrible." Bobbi commented, her eyes growing sadder as the truth sank in.

"It's worse. Try not to think much; PTSD sucks, let me tell you."

"You have PTSD?" Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was usually found in soldiers on the battlefield or victims of violent crimes. It was also fairly obvious when someone had it.

"Mild case. Had it a while. That and the autism really kick in when I'm tired or stressed; right now I'm both." Liam said shortly.

"Of course." Bobbi was silent for a moment before she asked the obvious question.

"How do we get out of here?"

"Stairs end eventually."

"I mean this timeline; how do we get back to the past?"

Liam came to a stop and rested against a wall, stretching his aching muscles and staring at his boots. "I honestly don't know."

   11. Chapter 11

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* * *

><p>Aria was scared, and so was Skye. They handled it different ways; Aria channeled her emotions into a constant wave of pain in front of her; Noah would be in for a rough ride if he was waiting in the dark.<p>

Skye handled it by talking, almost continuously.

"If Coulson and Ward and Fitz are hurt, we should go back!"

"Can't."

"I mean, they'll get another winch! Or we can throw a rope and grappling hook up there!"

"Can't."

"Even if Noah is back there, he won't be expecting us! Plus I doubt Ward went down without a fight; he'll probably be injured.

"Can't."

"Stop saying that!" Skye shouted.

Aria whirled on her, and almost forgot to turn down her pain wave. "Then stop suggesting stupid ideas! We _can't_ go back there, Skye! He will kill you and do worse to me! If he walked through all of those agents, he's still riding that high from the portal's blast, which means he's nigh unto invincible right now!"

Their voices echoed down the long catacombs, making Aria flinch.

"Take off that suit."

"Excuse me?" Skye stepped back, as if offended.

"Take off that suit! Your weapon is under it and it's slowing you down. Trust me, you'll be fine!" Aria snapped.

Reluctantly, Skye unzipped the huge rubber suit and slowly climbed out of it.

"You've fought Noah before, right?" Skye asked hesitantly.

Aria resumed her concentration and shrugged. "I'm not sure you could call it a fight."

"What happened? I mean, how'd you get out it alive?"

"I didn't." Aria said simply. "Liam collapsed a building on to of us and protected me from the falling rubble. Pathetic as it sounds, without him, I wouldn't have lasted this long."

Skye was silent for a minute as they walked along, each one hoping and praying they wouldn't find anyone else.

"You two are pretty close." Skye observed.

"We have to be." Aria said with a wry smile. "Mom was dead. Dad was drunk and distant. S.H.I.E.L.D. was okay, but it wasn't a real family. There were already lies and secrets and complications. Liam is the only one I can really trust. And who else can save you from a fifty thousand foot drop?"

"Ward did that once. For Simmons; she jumped out of the bus to try and protect us from a virus she had. Ward jumped out and saved her." Skye told the story almost wistfully, as if she had wanted to be there too.

"If you're jealous, don't be." Aria took a corner and they walked around a massive stone pillar. "He loves you. Always has, always will."

Skye was silent again as the thought registered. She started to speak, but stopped again.

"Surprised? Don't be. I know you love him too. That's why you were so rough on everyone else." Aria went on cruelly, dissecting the woman's feelings easily. "After Ward betrayed you, you figured there wasn't anyone else out there that deserved your love. No one was above reproach; they all had flaws and weaknesses that made you pause."

Aria stopped made Skye stop too. "It's what stole your innocence. Not Ward's betrayal, but your love for the man you thought he was."

Skye had no idea what to say. She looked around at the dark room beyond her, wondering what had made Aria suddenly stop.

"Did you hear something?" Skye asked her.

"No. But wandering is pointless. We'll wait here until someone finds us."

"What if that someone is Noah?" Skye asked, slightly nervous at the thought.

"Then we'll be fresh instead of exhausted when he kills us."

* * *

><p>Bobbi looked out at the bleak, desolate landscape and shivered inwardly. Trees were dead. Cars were abandoned. Buildings rotted and fell down around her. Life was absent; hope seemed long gone as well.<p>

Liam was leaning against the side of the building; they'd finally made the long trek to ground level. He was tired, and she was terrified. They were easy pickings for whatever evil found them next.

"What was it like? Growing up inâ€¦ this?" Bobbi asked, her expression turning sour as she faced the empty street.

"I didn't grow up in this. I grew up in S.H.I.E.L.D., and S.H.I.E.L.D. lived in this. I had a wall that kept it from me. Besides; I didn't know any different. This was life; what was I going to compare it to?" He straightened up and shrugged his shoulders, trying to work the aching muscles loose again.

"History. Weren't there pictures, videos, songs? About life before Hydra took over?" Bobbi asked. They both started walking, down the dusty and forgotten street.

"Yeah. But they were pictures, and videos, and songs. You watch TV shows but you don't see yourself on the set. You listen to songs but don't see yourself in the lyrics. We had them, sure, but we didn't live them."

"It must have been terrible." Bobbi said, shaking her head. Liam laughed a little, the sound barely leaving his throat.

"Without you? It was. Believe me."

Bobbi blushed and looked down, unsure of what to say.

"Sorry. I did it again, didn't I?"

"Did what?" She asked sincerely.

Liam looked off into the distance, trying to pick out familiar buildings or signs. "Made you uncomfortable. I loved you as family before I knew how to spell the word 'family'. I'm literally a stranger off the street to you."

Bobbi started to disagree, to tell him it was something else. But she didn't feel like lying, and didn't think the man beside her would buy it anyway. He was hard, unforgiving, and cold beyond belief. Was this really her _son_?

"I'm sorry." Bobbi whispered.

"Don't be. It's not your fault and I've had enough sympathy for a lifetime." Liam looked around at the intersection they'd come to.

Tall buildings reached up into the shockingly blue sky above. The city was deserted and so were they; shouldn't dark clouds have filled the sky to reflect their mood? Instead, bright sunshine poured down

on them.

"The S.H.I.E.L.D. outpost is buried on the edge of town. It had tunnels that led to a dozen different spots around the city. If we find one of them, we'll be in better shape then we are now." Liam explained.

Without warning, he spun on his heel and drew his weapon, his finger dancing across the trigger. He was pointing towards a building behind them. It was an old clothing store; two stories with windows looking down on them.

"What is it?" Morse whirled around too, batons in hand.

"I heard something. Or… felt something. There." He gestured at the second window from the street. The curtain was still swinging, just barely moving.

"Squatters?"

"If we're lucky." Liam tucked the weapon back in its holster and sighed.

"By strange coincidence, that's what I was looking for. Inside there is a tunnel that leads to the base."

"I don't remember hearing about any underground bases in Manhattan."

"That's because its new. We built it after S.H.I.E.L.D. fell." Liam didn't say any more as they approached the building, still on alert.

The door was a glass and metal affair; it looked new and professional.

"I was expecting everything to be different." Bobbi said as Liam cautiously opened the door.

"Futuristic?"

"Exactly."

"Get used to it." He tapped his ear, and the sunglasses unfolded across his skin. "That's the best you're going to see."

She admired the glasses for a second before they stepped inside. Liam used the lens to scan for heat signatures, movement, or anything else that would betray someone's presence.

Nothing stirred. He made his way towards the stairs, past the small racks of clothing.

"This is a kid's store?" Bobbi asked, glancing at the tiny clothes on hangars.

"Beats me. First time here." Liam said causally. He stopped at the foot as Bobbi stared at a tiny red dress, hanging limply against the wall.

"Mom? Agent Morse?" He corrected himself. She turned quickly, letting the dress fall back to where it had sat.

"Sorry. And call me Bobbi. Everyone else does." She insisted.

"Fine. I know I saw someone up here; be careful." Even tired and exhausted, he wouldn't let her take the lead. He slowly advanced up the stairs, each step a quick battle.

"What's the worst we'll see?" Bobbi asked, gripping her batons tightly. She'd lost her sidearm in their fall and was now kicking herself for it.

"If you're asking if we'll see mutants or zombies don't worry. When I left humans were still the dominant species on earth. Barely, but still kicking." Liam said ruefully.

They came up to the upstairs and found a short hallway. There were a few rooms behind small wooden doors; one appeared to be bathroom, another was a storage room.

But the first one they saw was open to the stairs. There was a bench near the window; the same window Liam had seen movement behind. Arranged around the bench were clothes from downstairs; all girls, and arranged systematically.

"What…?" Bobbi didn't finish the question. The same style of red dress she'd seen downstairs was lying in a dozen different spots. The former occupant had apparently been in love with the color.

"This is new. No dust. Someone was living in here." Liam deduced.

"With one obvious problem; no food. I don't see a kitchen anywhere and that bathroom definitely looks unused." Bobbi noticed. Sure enough, around the open door they could see layers of dust on the sink and faucet.

"Okay… weird straggler." Liam said callously. He started to head downstairs when Bobbi stopped him.

"No, sit down. Rest for a minute. I'll clear the rest of these rooms." Bobbi went room to room, slowly opening each door and peeking inside while Liam sat across from the window on a dusty seat.

"It was a mother." Bobbi said when she came back. "One who lost her child. She laid out each outfit in a line, like she was remembering what her daughter had worn."

Liam grunted and looked at the arrangement; Bobbi seemed to be on to something.

"Good guess. Let's go." He led the way downstairs without another word, heading for the S.H.I.E.L.D. tunnel.

It was tucked behind the counter; a shelf or two had to be taken down to allow the door to open. A metal blast door soon emerged, which Liam entered quickly.

As the door crept open on its well oiled hinges, dusty air came out

to greet them.

"That's weird…" Bobbi looked at the shelf Liam had removed, studying the edges carefully.

"What is?"

"This isn't dusty." She glanced at the other shelves while Liam examined the oddly well oiled hinges.

"Someone still uses this door." Liam said, thinking out loud.

And before Bobbi could say another word, the heard an ear piercing scream, right outside the shop.

* * *

><p>Aria and Skye were alone, sitting in the dark as they waited for someone to show up. Skye was nervously fidgeting with her sidearm, loading and unloading it. Aria contented herself with leaning against the column, eyes closed and ears peeled.<p>

"Would you please stop that?"

"What?"

"Making so much noise!" Aria snapped. Skye tucked her weapon back in her holster and scooted to sit next to Aria.

"What are we supposed to do?" Skye demanded.

"Shut up." Skye started to look offended, but Aria went on. "And listen."

Skye obeyed, and she slowly heard what Aria was talking about. There was absolutely no noise in the massive temple; concrete walls bounced sound right back at them. Skye could hear her own breathing; in a moment, she could hear Aria's. But then she heard a third pair of lungs, pumping in the thin air.

Skye tensed up, but Aria grabbed her arm. Wordlessly, they held their breaths. Now there was only one sound to concentrate on. It was a low, distant sound, like a predator stalking prey. Skye imagined she could hear his heartbeat; somehow she knew it was a he. It had a masculine sound to it; deep and throaty.

Both women were rigid as they sound grew closer. Faster. The man was moving, and moving towards them. Skye was ready to bolt; Aria was ready to kill. Fingers twitched eagerly. Hairs stood on end. Pulses quickened.

The breathing stopped. It was so close, Skye could tell it was coming out of his nose. In, and out. In, and out. Slow. Deliberate.

Without warning, they heard the cocking of a gun as a barrel was shoved in Aria's face.

* * *

><p>Liam was already running as the scream died; Bobbi was right

behind him. They burst out onto the street, searching for the source.
But there was nothing.<p>

Liam's pulse pounded; that scream had cut through his core. It was
like the woman had been tuned into his weaknesses, even as he stood
on the sidewalk, he felt a shiver go up his spine. His hands shook a
little as he studied the buildings, forcing himself to be thorough as
he searched.

"There's no one out here!" Bobbi sounded frustrated, but not scared.
The opposite of Liam, who barely heard her.

"Liam, we need to get back inside!" She put a hand on his shoulder,
and he jerked back as if slapped.

His eyes were bloodshot all of a sudden, and he kept staring into the
empty windows and dark alleys around them. Sweat appeared on his
forehead.

"Liam? There's nothing out here! We need to keep moving, okay?" She
gently put a hand on his shoulder and forced him to look at her. Her
expression was somewhere between concerned and terrified, but she
managed to get through the terror gripping him.

All of a sudden it was over. He had control of himself, and the
bone-chilling scream stopped repeating in his head.

"I'm sorryâ€¦" He blushed heavily in embarrassment before heading
back into the store, making a beeline for the tunnel.

He hopped over the counter and walked boldly into the darkened
tunnel, with Bobbi right behind him.

"What happened back there? You looked more rattled than normal."
Bobbi asked, her batons out and nervously twirling in her hands.

"I normally look rattled?" Liam asked dodging the question.

Bobbi had opened her mouth to speak again. Liam jumped in front of
her. The shotgun went off. The sound made Bobbi jump back, the force
was transferred to Liam's chest, and the dozen metal pellets fell to
the ground as their attacker pumped his weapon.

"Liam! Get down!"

It took them both a minute to process what was happening. Another
shot aimed over Liam's shoulder took him partially in the face and
streamed through Bobbi's long hair as she ducked.

"Stop! Enough!" Liam slapped his hand against the wall and a massive
shockwave shook the brick and mortar around them. Bobbi was thrown to
the floor, Liam crouched over her, and Agent Mackenzie fell onto his
butt.

As the air cleared of dust and they all calmed down enough to think,
the three of them made the connections as to who they were looking
at.

"Mac?" Bobbi asked, shoving Liam's protective arm away. She stood up,
despite Liam trying to keep her down, and they both stared at the man

a feet away.

Mac looked worse than Liam had ever seen him. His long beard had been roughly cut and was streaked with a lot of gray. His eyes looked sunken and hollow, while his body looked frail. He'd landed hard and wasn't anxious to get back up. It was then that Liam realized he'd also been shot; blood was soaking the front of his shirt.

"Mac! It's me, Liam!" Liam approached him carefully, reaching out a hand to grab the Shax lying beside him.

"I know that! It's her!" Mac shouted, pointing at Bobbi.

"Her? Mac, this is Bobbi! From thirty years ago! We got sucked back into another portal; we just got here half an hour ago!" Liam explained, managing to snatch the weapon away from him.

Mac stared hard at Bobbi, who looked like she'd seen a ghost. Recognition slowly flooded in, and his gritted teeth relaxed as he spoke.

"Bobbi?"

"Mac?" She stepped past Liam to kneel down beside him, staring at his weathered face in horror. She reached out a hand to touch his shoulder, and seemed shocked that he was really there.

"Yeah, its me." He groaned. "I'm sorry; I thought you were someone else."

Liam shook his head and tried to clear his thoughts. "Who else would we be, Mac? And what happened to you? You look like you've been shot!"

Mac grunted and looked at his shoulder wound as if for the first time. "Oh, would you look at that. Help me up." He reached out a hand and Liam gingerly pulled him to his feet. The man was nearing seventy, even though he looked around fifty.

"A lot happened in the past few days. Come on; the base is this way." Mac led the way, helped by Liam, while Bobbi continued to stare in disbelief. Any thoughts she entertained about this all being a lie or a mistake were gone.

"What happened? Noah came through on our end and almost killed us!"

"Bad stuff. The carrier was attacked by Hydra as soon as we opened the portal. Noah was with them." Mac explained, leaning heavily on Liam as they walked. "They destroyed it and we lost a lot of guys. Coulson and May didn't make it."

Liam's face fell as he heard his old friend, but he said nothing.

"A lot of us made it out, though. Fitzsimmons, Hunter, Daisy, me and a few other new agents. We headed here, thinking no one would think to look for us in this dump." Mac looked around at the old and dusty fixtures on the walls as they passed; it looked old for the year 2013; for 2043 it looked ancient.

"I'm the only one who made it."

"Hydra?" Liam asked hesitantly.

"Worse. Mockingbird."

They hit a large, steel reinforced door and Liam entered in the three digit code he'd memorized. The door slowly crawled to the left on a magnetic track, revealing the base beyond. It was a huge, low ceilinged room with a sunken ring in the center, full of computer monitors. In different alcoves around the room were racks of supplies and weapons, as well as doors leading elsewhere.

"Mockingbird?" Liam asked, more than a little confused. There were a lot of people and things who'd used that name.

Mac sat down on a rolling chair and reached for a medic's kit embedded in the wall.

"Yeah. Liam, I know this is going to sound crazy, but what doesn't any more?" Mac laughed a little as he disinfected the wound himself. "If you're here, that means I really have lost it!"

Liam cracked a wry smile and shook his head. "Sorry Uncle Mac; we really are here. Aria's back in the past, but we got sucked into another portal after Noah destabilized it. Bobbi and I really are stuck here."

"Great. Looks like we're all screwed." Mac slapped a small bandage onto the wound after cutting open his shirt enough to see it clearly. It was small, no larger than what a nine-millimeter would make.

"I know you're not going to believe this, Liam, but your mother… she came back."

Liam shot a quick glance at Bobbi and started to speak when Mac cut him off.

"Not her. Your real mother. From this timeline."

   12. Chapter 12

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* * *

><p>Aria looked at the barrel of the gun, Skye reached for her own, and their attacker started to speak. He didn't get the chance.<p>

Aria lashed out with her powers, and the man sank to his knees in pain. Skye drew her own weapon and pointed it at his head, while Aria kept up the field of torture and whipped out another glow-stick. She cracked it with one hand and held it up to the man's face.

"Hot-stuff?"

"Ward?"

"Please stop…"

Aria dropped her hand and Skye dropped her weapon, while Ward finally let out a huge breath and clutched at his gut. His face was pale white from pain; Aria had thought it was Noah, so she wasn't holding back. He'd gotten enough to drive some people insane.

"Oh crap, are you okay?" Aria sank to her knees and looked him over, trying to decide if he was still breathing.

"I'm fine!" He lied through gritted teeth.

"What happened? How did you get down here?" Skye demanded as he slowly shook off the effects of Aria's attack.

"After the Inhuman attacked, I came down myself to make sure you two were okay! He's down here somewhere too."

"How? We saw the winch get torched and tossed down here!" Aria argued, glancing around the dark room.

"Grappling hook attached to the railing on the stairs. It barely held and snapped as soon as I hit the floor." Ward slowly climbed to his feet, rolling his shoulders and blinking rapidly.

"Great. So we're still stuck here." Aria snapped.

"For the moment." Ward shot back.

Skye looked ecstatic to see him alive, and spoke quietly as Aria looked around for any sign of Noah.

"What about Coulson and the rest?"

"They're alive, but hurt. That thing came in so fast we barely saw him before he hit us. I got a few shots off but I don't think it slowed him down."

"I seriously doubt any amount of bullets slowed him down. Have you seen him since you came down here?" Aria demanded.

"No, I was looking for you two."

"Great. Now what?" Aria asked, shaking her head angrily.

But as she turned around, they all spotted a faint light in the distance. It was small and barely visible, but it was there. As they watched, it grew larger and brighter.

"How big is this place?" Ward asked, raising his weapon.

"Small enough that Fitz could run around the outer edge in less than an hour." Aria remembered hearing the story, but somehow numbers and figures had been left out.

"Great, so tiny." Skye said, half joking.

"That must be the central chamber; where the diviners are activated. I'd bet anything that's Noah making the light." Aria gripped her gun tighter, wishing she'd grabbed something heavier duty now that she was actually facing the monster.

"Diviners?" Ward asked.

"Things that turn people like Skye into people like me. Trick is, you'd probably bite the dust. So stay back, and don't touch anything." Aria ordered. She took a step forward with Skye and Ward right behind her.

"What do you think he's doing?" Skye asked quietly, still staring at the light. It was now tall and thin, like a lantern shining through a barely open door.

"Who knows. He's crazy. Maybe trying to contact Afterlife? Gordon found about you somehow. Maybe trying to fully activate himself as an Inhuman? We know he can just barely control his stolen abilitiesâ€¦" Aria listed, still slowly advancing.

"So we're just going to walk straight up to him and see what he's doing?" Ward demanded.

"You got a better plan, handsome?" Aria asked sincerely.

Ward raised an eyebrow at her description of him, but nodded quickly.

"Skye and I will go in first, draw his attention. You hit him with that pain you hit me with and when he goes down, I'll take care of the rest."

"As fun as that sounds, no." Aria objected. "He'd kill you on sight, same Skye for later, and my powers aren't going to have the same effect on him. His tolerance for pain is insane."

"Alright, tell us your plan! You know him better than anyone, how do we stop him?" Skye demanded.

Another voice joined the conversation, and it made all of them jump.

"You don't."

* * *

><p>"After your mom died, we buried her in a cemetery upstate. Hydra somehow got word of it, and they dug her up. We still don't know why. But for their own twisted reasons, they exposed her to a Kree crystal. She turned, while she was still dead." Mac explained. Liam sat down across from him, listening intently.<p>

"They kept her locked up and experimented on her for years. Then she escaped, and we've spent the past twenty years hearing about rumors of a ghost. We didn't want to tell you or your sister; we didn't want to put you through that." Mac said guiltily.

"Brilliant move." Liam's voice cracked as he spoke, and Mac went on.

"She finally made it here, after killing dozens of people. From what we've heard, she can make people see things that aren't there. Hear things they want to hear. Like mirages, but she controls them. She lures people in and then kills them as painfully as possible. Now she's here, and she got the rest of the team."

Mac had a tear in his eye as he thought about it, and Bobbi listened in horror as he went into detail.

"Fitz thought Simmons was a Hydra agent. Shot her in the back. Daisy thought he was Hydra. Broke every bone in his body. He died shortly after that. The new agents thought she wasâ€¦ who knows. They opened fire. I jumped into it and tried to stop them; they wouldn't listen to me. It was like I was invisible. I was the only one who made it."

Liam listened to the all the names, getting more and more upset with each description. As Mac finished, Liam jumped up and walked over to another wall, his head in his hands. Mac and Bobbi watched as he sank his fist into solid concrete, making a huge crater in the wall.

Bits of broken stone rained down as he leaned against the broken wall, shaking with grief.

"I'm sorryâ€¦ We should have told you sooner, but we thought she was a myth! A legend, something Hydra spread around to scare us!" Mac explained, his voice weak and shaky.

"Aria's favorite color is red." Liam moaned. "So was mom's."

Bobbi heard him and caught on, while Mac just stared.

"She always like to dress Aria up in these little red dresses. Mockingbird is here; right above us. We were in her shrine to Aria."

Bobbi put her hand over her mouth and closed her eyes, trying to process it all. She couldn't.

"I need some air."

"No!" Liam ran to the door and slammed it shut, startling Bobbi and Mac. "If Mockingbird is out there, she'll kill you! I'm sorry this is overwhelming. Believe me, I am. But you're going to have to stay here."

Liam let go of the door and sank back down into his chair. Bobbi pulled over another one and they sat in a triangle, all thinking hard as the news sank in.

"She's really back?" Liam asked. His voice sounded broken and beaten.

"Her body, yes. But she's like a ghost of your mother. She's insane and in pain, and she can't stop killing. Either she uses us to kill ourselves, or she does it herself when you're the last man standing." He ran a hand down his face and sighed, looking at Bobbi for the

first time.

"You really are from the past? That machine Fitzsimmons whipped up really worked?"

Bobbi swallowed hard and nodded. "A little too well."

"And you really don't remember any of this? Any of him or his sister?" Mac asked, nodding at Liam.

"I wish I did."

"No you don't." Liam snapped. "Trust me. Nothing good worth remembering."

He suddenly jumped up and headed for the ring of computers in the center of the room, looking determined.

"Is this mainframe tied into the Iliad's?"

Mac tried to stand up, but ended up just rolling his chair closer. "It was before the depth charge flooded it."

"So we have the data backups from Fitzsimmons lab?"

"We should."

Liam was already activating the old system and bringing up files, looking for a specific set of notes in all of the database. He also pulled up a map and angled it like he'd seen on Hill's tablet, back in Fury's office.

"What are you doing?" Bobbi asked, joining him in the ring of computers.

"The portal first opened here." He pointed to a spot high in the atmosphere, where he and Aria had first fallen from the sky.

"Then here." He pointed to the spot where their Iliad had sunk.

"Finally here." He pointed to the spot where the bus had flown to, and where they'd emerged in the future.

"Sheer luck propelled us in the right direction to land here; we could have ended up in the Arctic or in Russia. But here's the important part." He zoomed out and pointed to a spot outside of Earth's atmosphere.

"One hundred thousand feet above sea level. Out in space. That's where the portal is going to open next, in less than two days."

"Are you sure?" Mac asked, standing up to see the monitor more clearly.

"No. But it's my best guess." Liam admitted.

Bobbi wasn't staring at the screen anymore; she focused on a dark form in the back of the room. Liam and Mac hadn't noticed it, but she had. It was sitting down against a door, with what looked like a

rifle beside it.

"Liam?" Bobbi whispered. He turned around, and she nodded at the figure.

Liam stiffened up as he saw it. He walked purposely towards it, not flinching in the slightest. When he approached it, motion activated lights turned on overhead, just the one that lit the center of the room.

Liam jumped and Bobbi froze as they recognized the face. Agent Mackenzie was lying dead on the floor, his trusty Shax beside him. They both whirled around to look at the chair; it was still resting by its desk. The medical kit was still on the wall. Mac had been dead for hours; maybe days.

"Mockingbird is here."

* * *

><p>Noah had stepped out from behind the stone doors, staring at the group in a friendly way. His smile was casual and his eyes seemed to be warm and inviting. It was his charcoal-like skin that told Skye and Ward that something was wrong. Flames shot out and tasted the air from the cracks in his face and neck; his body was covered in scorched metal armor, just like Aria and Liam's.<p>

"Stay back!" Ward stepped forward, gun drawn and finger ready on the trigger. Skye drew her weapon as well, pointing it at Noah's head.

"Oh, I'll be with you in a moment, my love." Noah said, glancing at Aria quickly.

"But first I need to talk to Ward. He and I have some business to discuss; nothing serious, just a change of loyalties." Noah was casually droning on like an insurance salesman at the front door; practiced and monotonous, he went on like nothing was wrong.

"My name is Noah Baxter. I am an Inhuman." He introduced himself grandly, bowing slight towards Ward.

"You're an abomination!" Aria corrected, gripping her weapon tighter. She knew if she fired Noah would snap, and that would mean someone dying. But she couldn't stop herself from speaking.

"Enough!" He flared up and searing flames shot out of his pores, bathing them all in orange light. He snarled at Aria furiously before turning back to Ward, completely normal and unfazed.

"Now, where was I? Ah yes. S.H.I.E.L.D. It is a dying beast that was never meant to be. Don't you agree?" He asked conversationally.

"First founded to stop another visionary, another man only trying to change the world for the better! Redskull; may he live forever…"

Skye whispered out of the corner of her mouth as Noah spoke.

"I thought he was dead?"

"Longer story."

"But I digress. You, Skye, and the rest of the team upstairs; you work for S.H.I.E.L.D., don't you?" Noah asked kindly. "You trust it. Feed it. Spend time with it. It's practically your entire life! But there's a better way!"

"I know what's in your heart, Grant Douglas Ward! You name literally means Great Dark Protector! I have seen the future, my friend! I have _lived _it! And I am telling you that there is a better way. A more fulfilling way! A way to finally find closure, once and for all!"

As Noah had been speaking, Skye and Aria noticed Ward's expression. It went from hard and cold to something else. Pained, and almost broken. Like old wounds had been ripped open.

"I know all about it, friend. The well. Thomas. Garrett. Your dog. I _know_!" He stepped closer, and Ward didn't stop him.

"I know about your desire for a family! I know about your love for Skye! You only want the best for her, to see her become the woman she is destined to be! And so do I!"

Skye recoiled as he said her name, while Aria's face fell. He was doing it. He was winning. Ward was coming over to his side. Even with Garrett dead, another monster had come along and taken him in. She looked to Skye with horror written on her face.

"I can show you the world, and help you remake it in your image! No more pain, no more lies, no more deceit! We would help people! Make them stronger, let them lead the lives they deserve to live! Strengthen the weak, punish the strong! No one else would have to be shut out in the cold! No one else would be forced to sit alone in the dark! We could fix _everything_!" Noah promised, stepping even closer to Ward now.

"I know what you want, Grant Ward. I know what you desire!" He turned to look at Skye, who paled and shrank back against a pillar.

"I know how much you love her! And I know what it is like to be rejected! We could fix her; and together, we'll fix them all!" Noah was so close, Ward could feel his hot breath on his skin.

"Say it, Ward! Say you'll join me! Become the man you truly are!"

Ward stared into the black, burning eyes. Skye looked pleadingly at him. Aria watched in horror as the two men stood face to face, like brothers in arms. Slowly, Ward turned to look into Skye's eyes.

"Skye? Run!"

And all at once Ward exploded into action. He drove his fist up into Noah's chin, snapping his head back unnaturally. He kicked out one of Noah's knees and fired a dozen rounds right into the man's chest.

Aria extended her arm and let loose with everything she had; blood streamed out of her nose and eyes as she screamed in rage. Noah fell onto his back, surprise written all over his face.

And Skye ran, straight into the diviner's chamber. She'd seen it, resting on the pedestal, waiting to be locked into place. Somehow, Noah had found a diviner, and had planned to use it on himself.

Ward yelled in pain as Noah lashed out, sending him flying into the darkness with flames trailing after him.

Aria sank to the floor as a fireball soared over her, scorching her hair and clothes. She looked up at Skye through bloody eyes, pleading with her to run. Noah turned around to see her, standing in the doorway.

Skye ran into the room as Noah chased her, yelling in fury the whole time. Skye's fingers touched the metal of the diviner, and it slid into place. The metal lit up at her touch, and symbols danced around on its surface. The metal sides slid down, and a blue crystal emerged.

The doors sealed themselves. The light died as Noah was lost to sight. Aria and Ward watched in horror as the chamber was activated, with Skye and Noah inside.

13. Chapter 13

DISCLAIMER: I do not now, nor have I ever, owned the characters and settings of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. I own only the characters I myself have created. Any views, opinions, or beliefs of these characters does not necessarily reflect the views, opinions or beliefs of myself.

* * *

><p>Liam was shaken while Bobbi was floored. Mac was dead. Had been since before they'd arrived. They'd seen and heard Mockingbird, somehow entering their minds and making them see what they'd wanted to see.<p>

"What is going on?" Bobbi demanded, standing closer to Liam.

"We locked the door; there's no way she can get inâ€¦" He said it as if here trying to convince himself.

"Unless she's already inside! This place is huge and we can't see or hear her!" Bobbi reminded him, waving her hands in the air where Mac had been. She looked on the verge of tears.

"We'll figure it out." Liam ground out, blinking hard as he paced.

"How? We are trapped in the future, in an abandoned city, being hunted the future me who happens to be psychotic and telepathic!" Bobbi shouted.

"I've been through worse." Liam said resolutely. He was still pacing, trying to focus his thoughts.

"What could you have possibly been through that even remotely resembles this?" Bobbi demanded, standing in his path angrily.

Liam looked into her eyes and actually smiled. It was a childish, boyish smile that caught her completely off guard. He took put a hand on her shoulder gently and spoke so softly she barely heard him.

"I watch you die." Bobbi suddenly relaxed enough to think clearly, and realized again how much this stranger cared about her. "We're alive. Both of us, together. Aria is on the other side, I'm sure already working on how to get us home. We know of a way out, we just have to get there. Trust me. I've been through worse."

He looked at the monitors again, running the math in his head. Bobbi joined him and thought out loud.

"The earth's atmosphere is around three hundred miles thick, but eighty percent of it is actually in the first ten miles. One hundred thousand feet straight up is around eighteen miles; we'll be well out of the maximum height of a Quin-jet."

"I know what to do. But first we're going to need to load up on supplies. If we're going to move through the city with Mockingbird here and Hydra outside the city limits, we'll need firepower." He gingerly scooped up Mac's Shax and checked the load on it.

The weapon was black painted titanium with an axe blade welded under the barrel's mouth. There was no pump; the weapon was an automatic, with a drum near the trigger that held its ammo. The drum could be ejected to make it lighter and easier to swing, with grips on the rifle's butt to make it easier to wield. All in all, it was dangerous weapon in anyone's hands.

"There's an armory through one of these doors. Come on."

Liam wrenched open another door, leveling the Shax as it swung open. He gave Bobbi his Icer and led the way into the darkened room.

"Even if she's in here, she'll make us see whoever she wants us to see!" Bobbi hissed, following Liam into the room on pins and needles.

"So I'll shoot anything that moves and call it good. We don't have any friends left here." Liam countered.

"That's what Mockingbird wants us to think, right?"

Liam switched on the light and lowered his gun. Dust covered every inch of the place, even the floor. It was clear no one had been inside recently.

"Load up; there's bags over here." Liam tossed a thick skinned black rucksack to her, and they both turned to the racks and racks of weapons surrounding them.

"What is all of this stuff?" Bobbi asked as Liam snatched things off of the shelves.

"That's another of these." Liam pointed to his ear and the black node

of the sunglasses.

"And this?" She held up a smaller black device that fit in the palm of her hand.

"That's a power morpher; turns you into a Ranger." Liam said with a straight face.

Bobbi stared at it and then him skeptically.

"Kidding. That's a new version of C4 Fitz whipped up. Twice the explosive in half the material."

Bobbi tucked a few of the things into her bag and kept moving, finding a rack of traditional side arms and clips.

"Did the Power Ranger seriously survive this long?" Bobbi asked, looking embarrassed she knew the name.

"No. After the TV and internet died, Mac saw that my sister and I were going crazy. He found, or stole I'm not sure which, a flash drive with a lot of the old episodes on it. Wasn't the best show on earth but not the worst either."

"I watched the original series when I was kid." Bobbi admitted with a smile.

"I know. We found the picture of you in the pink outfit, ready to go trick-or-treating." Liam said with a smile.

Bobbi blushed as she slung a strange looking rifle over her shoulder. "Great. Hunter dug that out?"

"Mac, actually. Hunter†¦ didn't do much." Liam said dryly.

"You always call him by his last name, but you keep correcting yourself when you call me 'mom'. Why is that?" Bobbi asked curiously.

Liam snorted in derision. "Hunter wasn't a dad. He was a struggling drunk that occasionally was there for us. There's not much to tell."

He was working on the more advanced weapons and armor; things Fitz and Simmons had designed after he was born. There was a collapsible shield that strapped onto a wrist; it was made out of a Vibranium alloy similar to Captain Roger's shield.

Beside it was a long, thick staff with blades on either end. Magnetic gloves came with it that attracted the staff back to them almost instantaneously; they were designed with Iron Man's armor in mind. He could control the suit with his movements and have the individual pieces fly right to him; the wearer of these gloves could do the same.

There was a modified nine-millimeter with a second barrel under the first that fired a special flare. It burned hotter and brighter than normal, and was made to ignite enemies. It also had close to thirty incendiary rounds.

Next on the rack was a pair of knives with edges so sharp they could cut Vibranium. They were short, small, and collapsible to be easily hidden. Simplistic in design, deadly in the right hands. They were also small, so as to fit into a woman's hands.

All of these things Liam dumped into the bag, with a few other things as well. Knives, ammo, and grenades.

"What are these?" Bobbi was standing near the door, holding a small briefcase in her hands. Inside were two batons that looked oddly familiar to her.

"Oh good, you found them. Put your wrists on the guides." He instructed. He set his now full sack down and knelt in front of her to guide her arms into position.

The half circles fit over Bobbi's wrists perfectly, and there was a quick stinging noise as they activated.

"What was that?" She pulled her hand away and examined the half-dozen puncture wounds in her skin. As she turned over her wrists to check the other side, the twin batons suddenly shot in her hands.

She slowly stood up, holding the batons tightly in her hands. She threw one experimentally; it hit the far wall and flew back into her open hand. She smiled dangerously as she looked over her new weapons.

"I like these."

"I know. Come on; we need to get to DC before that portal opens." Liam led the way out of the armory somewhat urgently, heading for one of the other doors.

"What's in DC?" Bobbi asked as she tucked the batons into her belt.

Liam smiled as he hit the door control.

"Our way home."

The room beyond was a garage; there were a dozen vehicles inside, but the one that caught their attention was bright red. It was an old corvette from an era long gone. Liam knew the car anywhere, but Bobbi was confused.

"Hello, Lola."

Before Liam could take another step, the lights suddenly went out. He tensed up and reached for the Shax on his shoulder, already anticipating trouble.

He heard Bobbi scream, the lights came back on, and he was standing alone in the garage.

* * *

><p>Aria and Ward ran to the stone doors, slamming into them at full speed.<p>

"No!" Ward slammed his fist into the stone, fury written all over his face.

"Stand back!" Aria whipped out a small black box from her belt and slapped it onto the wall before jerking Ward backwards.

They both covered their heads as the charge went off, blowing stone and dust into the air. As soon as the seal was broken, the two ran to the new hole.

Standing in the center of the chamber were two stone covered figures; one was obviously Noah, being kicked in the face by Skye! They were frozen in place as the stone had formed over them and transformation took effect.

"Skye!" Ward leapt through the hole with Aria hot on his heels.

The stone fell apart easily as Ward and Aria ripped it off of her, revealing the skin and fabric beneath. Soon Skye's face appeared, eyes closed tightly.

"Skye! Can you hear me!" Ward shouted, frantically pulling her out of the cocoon.

"Oh noâ€¦" Aria stepped away from Skye to look at Noah's rigid form.

Cracks appeared in his new skin. Fire spurted out, and the blackened stone started to melt.

"We need to go, now!" Aria urged, helping rip the unconscious Skye from the last of the rocky covering.

Suddenly, the head of Noah's statue shattered, sending flying shards of molten rock everywhere. Ward and Aria shielded Skye as Noah roared in pain, flames shooting high into the air.

"Ward! Skye!"

A new voice joined the mix, and Aria spun around to see Coulson standing in the chamber beyond.

"Go! Go now!" Aria jerked Ward towards the hole in the door, while he carried Skye. He shoved her through the hole while Coulson caught her on the other side, gun in hand.

"He's waking up!" Aria shouted, standing between him and the rest of them.

Rock melted, and Noah became more and more visible. But there was no charcoal skin; no burnt remnants of a man. There was only fire.

Flames for skin, lava for blood, scorched stone for boneâ€¦ Aria could see it all. A dark red skull looked out at her, while fiery eyes glared hatred at her.

"_No!"_ The creature roared, and the rest of the stone cocoon fell away. He shot a beam of white hot flames straight at Aria, right as Coulson and Ward jerked her through the hole.

Flames erupted from their improvised door as Coulson shouted.

"Run! Run for the rope!"

Three of them ran while Ward carried Skye, still unconscious in his arms. Fire spewed out behind them, and Noah stepped into sight.

It didn't speak, it didn't move, and it didn't seem to be anything like the human it once was. Living flame shot into the dark after them, eating up the stone floor like it was dry grass.

Coulson hit the harness and shoved it onto Skye while Ward and Aria helped. But as the straps were locked into place, she finally woke up. And then the tremors started.

Small at first, but growing in magnitude. The earth and stone around them shook as the fires chased after them. They all clung to Skye as the new winch above them strained with effort, and they slowly started to rise.

The inferno hit the wall behind them and lapped back onto itself, like a sea of flames. The heat was oppressive; they could feel their boots start to melt and their clothes catch on fire. But rocks started to rain in from the ceiling; Noah's lake of fire was about to be buried.

Fitz watched as the replacement winch struggled and strained with its burden, and felt the heat rising from the hole. He nervously walked back and forth, staring down into the abyss as the rope ascended.

The other agents were standing nearby, weapons drawn and ready to fire. They were in full tactical gear, some of them burned badly from Noah's first attack. Fitz had miraculously survived unharmed, and helped Ward get down to the temple below. He would have been next down if the rope had hadn't snapped.

Suddenly, Coulson, Aria, Ward and Skye all emerged, sweating and looked terrified. The agents around him flinched, but didn't fire as the room suddenly grew unbearably hot.

"This whole place is coming down! Go, go!" Coulson grabbed the edge of the hole and jerked the group of survivors over to edge, unclipping Skye from the rope as soon as she was on solid ground. She was barely conscious and in a trance, staring down into the hole in wonder.

"Skye! Come on!" Aria pulled her away as the floor started to collapse and the earthquake spread in power.

The team raced up the stone stairway; heat and falling stone chased after them as the floor collapsed and Noah's screams echoed upward. Skye was being dragged by Aria and Ward, while Coulson and Fitz led the way. The rest of the agents sprinted at top speed as they finally hit the open air, outside of the castle's walls.

The earthquake continued; the entire castle was now falling in on itself, and the ground beneath their feet was still shaking.

"Skye, I'm really sorry about this…" Aria whipped out her gun and fired a round straight into Skye's chest.

* * *

><p>Liam ran through the small base, his panic growing by the second. The control room. Nothing.<p>

The armory. Nothing.

The garage. Nothing.

Bobbi was gone.

Liam ran through the tunnels, back to the clothing store above them. His heart pounded in his ears as he ran, his mind going over the disturbing possibilities. Was she dead? Was she dying? Was she right in front of him but hidden from view?

He hit the clothing store and leapt over the counter, emerging on the street out of breath.

"Bobbi!" He shouted at the top of his lungs, turning around three hundred and sixty degrees.

Empty streets echoed the sound back to him.

"Mom…" He sank to his knees as the feeling of dread overcame him. He'd lost her again.

He'd been there beside her, and he'd lost her again. His eyes squeezed shut as he held his head in his hands, listening for any sound, anywhere. Anything to tell him what to do, or where to go.

The sound of metal hitting stone hit him. Electricity seemed to coarse through him as he jumped up and sprinted towards it; a metal baton, lying on the street.

He slid the last few feet on his kneepads, scooping up the baton in his hands. It started to pull away, like it was trying to escape him. He glanced up at the street beyond and held the baton out. It almost flew from his hands, pointing him down the long and lonely road.

Liam kept it at arm's length and ran in the direction it was pulling, using it like a bloodhound to sniff her out. Bobbi had the tracking chips in her arms; the baton was trying to return to her. How it had come loose or why didn't occur to Liam; he just followed it onward, hoping to catch a glimpse of Bobbi again.

He rounded corners, leapt over fences, barged through long abandoned houses. Still the Baton led him on, dragging him at times through the city. He stopped in his tracks as he saw her.

She was standing on the street corner, her hair flowing well past her shoulders. Her armor was gone; she was wearing old pajamas instead. With Smurfs on the front; just like she'd worn on the carrier. And the morning Liam had been sick.

"Mom?"

She looked at him innocently, as if she were confused. She held up a hand and gestured him forward, slower at first, and then faster. Urgently.

Liam was beyond exhausted, but his tired legs plowed onward anyway. He made it to the corner right as she stepped out of sight.

As he hit the brick wall panting, she appeared again. In a doorway this time, still urging him forward.

"Come on Liam! I need your help!" She whispered delicately. Liam ran forward, jumping up onto the step as she vanished again. He kicked down the door and ran inside, looking around at the hospital hallway.

There was a waiting room on his right, a desk right in front of him, and a long hallway on his left. He'd burst into a side door a small clinic.

Bobbi appeared again, this time just inside a room on his left.

"Come here, Liam!" She smiled sweetly at him, and he followed her into the room.

It was an operating theatre. There were lights above them, a table in front of them, and instruments on a tray. Lying on the table was Aria, fast asleep in a patient's gown.

"She's sick, Liam."

Liam nodded. Aria was always sick as a child. Mom made her better.

"We need to help her."

Liam nodded again. It made perfect sense to him.

"Help me, Liam. Help me hold her down. She can't move, or else she won't get better."

Liam stood over her as she woke up. She was still so small; a child at best. He reached over her and held her arms to the table, his brute strength easily overpowering her.

"Hold while I make her betterâ€¦" And Bobbi picked up a scalpel.

* * *

><p>Bobbi Morse was terrified, confused, and lost. And now she was in a nightmare.<p>

Her mother had appeared and whisked her away from Liam, off to an old hospital. She was so strong, and Bobbi was so weakâ€¦ It was just like when she was a child, and her mom had to drag her into piano lessons. She hated piano; she could never learn more than a few notes each lesson. But her mother had dragged her in anyway, swearing that it would make her better.

But now, she was in a hospital. There was a man there, holding her down. She struggled against him; she hated hospitals! But her mother was there, leaning over her too.

"Help me hold her, Liam."

Her vision cracked, as if a glass had shattered. Liam? That was the name that man used, the man who called himself her son…

"Help me, Liam."

"I'll hold her, mom. Just make her better."

Bobbi snapped out of it completely, staring up at the two standing above her. Liam was in a daze, his eyes glazed over as he held her tightly to the table. But worst of all, another woman was on the other side of her, glaring down hatefully at her.

She was old and decrepit, with long stringy strands of white hair raining down from her wrinkled scalp. Her eyes were sunken into her head, with angry black pupils glaring out at her. Her nose was gone; only a gaping hole remained. Her lips were black and curled into a sneer as she stared down at Bobbi.

It was her. The woman above her was Bobbi Morse, thirty years older. She'd died, been brought back to life, and twisted into a horrible shadow of her former self.

She spoke with a dry, cracked voice.

"Help me hold her, Liam! Help me hold her down!"

A scream escaped Bobbi's lips as the scalpel descended.

* * *

><p>Aria stood over Skye's unconscious form as she was loaded into a Quin-jet on a gurney. Ward was on the other side, holding her hand gently as she was taken away.<p>

Fitz was farther off, watching as the castle behind them slowly fell into the ground, and the sea rushed in to fill the new hole.

Coulson was overseeing the other agents. They planned on moving out from the makeshift runway as soon as possible.

"So is that thing dead?" Coulson asked as Aria joined him.

"Man I hope so…" Aria answered with a sigh.

Coulson glanced over at Skye's Quin-jet as it took off, headed for a S.H.I.E.L.D. medical facility on the mainland.

"Will she be okay?" Coulson asked with fatherly concern in his voice.

"That was a pretty tough way to go through the mist; but she's pretty tough herself. She'll be fine, Agent." Aria finally managed to use his correct title.

They were silent for a moment as they watched the other agents pile gear and supplies into other jets.

"You know, the past few days have been very…" He stopped midway, searching for the right word.

"Weird? Strange? Sucky?"

"Chaotic." Coulson smiled. "I'm looking forward to when we can all sit down and discuss how this is going to work."

Aria smiled and nodded, looking out to sea as she spoke. "Believe me, so am I. Skye, Ward, Mac, Bobbi… Hey, have you heard from Liam and Bobbi?" Aria suddenly asked.

"No, we didn't get any signal down there." He pulled out his phone and grimaced.

"Great… three missed calls from Director Fury. That can't be good." He dialed the right number and held the phone up to his ear.

Aria mouthed the word 'speaker' and he obliged.

"Agent Coulson! What happened? I'm about ready to order the military into action! I've got Insight heli-carriers _still _out firing at targets, your bus sitting outside my office _and_ your team has been radio silent for two hours! What happened?"

"I'm sorry Director; we hit a few snags. But the threat is over; the other Inhuman that came through the portal is gone, as is the Kree temple. We took a few casualties, but nothing serious." He glanced down at his melted shoes and burnt arms, watching as Skye's jet soared out of sight into a cloud bank.

"I wish I could say the same." Fury said in a pained tone. "We lost Agent Morse and Liam Hunter into the portal."

Coulson's head snapped up while Aria's face fell.

"They were sucked in and we haven't seen them since."

Coulson tried to put a sympathetic hand on Aria's shoulder, but she jerked free. She walked a short ways on the tarmac, eyes watery and face livid with anger.

"We're on our way back now, Director."

But as he hung up the phone, he spotted Fitz, running at full speed and screaming at the top of his lungs. He stared at him as he ran, trying to figure out what was going on. Aria stopped dead in her tracks as she saw what was happening.

The ocean water that had moved to fill in the massive sinkhole Skye had formed was boiling. Steam was rising into the air. The stone blocks, shattered and broken, were turning into slag. Heat rose from the rubble in waves.

A bright light shone from the wreckage, and suddenly a fiery figure shot out of the ground. Wings spread twelve feet across, bathed in

flames. Black, ashen armor covered his body. Twin fireballs as bright as suns shone out of his eye sockets.

And then Noah was gone. He flew off into the sky, leaving a trail of flames behind him.

* * *

><p>Aria kept struggling so hard, Liam had to almost hurt the girl to keep her still. His mother was still holding the scalpel over her, trying to get her aim just right.<p>

"Hold her still, Liam! I have to do this right…" His mother said softly. Liam nodded and held her even tighter, knowing she'd have bruises later.

Bobbi struggled as hard as she could, but the horrifying creature had planned well. Liam was by far stronger than her, and she was pinned down against the hard metal.

"Liam! It's me, let me go!" Bobbi screamed again. She threw herself forward, trying desperately to break Liam's grip. She slammed her feet down on the bottom of the table and arched her back suddenly.

The baton in her belt and the one Liam had dropped near the door both flew into her hands, and she felt a switch in her fingers. She pressed hard on it as the scalpel flew towards her face, and the table was electrified!

Liam was thrown back, as was Mockingbird, and Bobbi rolled painfully off of the table, barely conscious. The room seemed to spin as she lied there, pain coursing through her.

Liam stood above her, trying to clear his vision. The mirage faded, and he recognized Bobbi beside him on the floor. She was hurt; he'd bruised her arms. She was stunned from the shock of her batons. She was scared, lost, and confused. And it was Liam's fault.

He jumped to his feet, narrowing his eyes at the monster in front of him. It all made sense to him, and fury clouded his vision. Mockingbird glared out at him dangerously, rising to her feet as well. She was wearing the same combat armor Liam and Bobbi were wearing; it just hung looser on her white and wrinkled flesh.

"You're dead! You're all dead, and I'm going to kill you!" Mockingbird screamed and lashed out at Liam with surprising speed. He dodged out of the way easily, grabbing her arm in one hand.

He dragged her forward and brought his Icer to her temple, his finger already squeezing on the trigger. But he never made it.

Bobbi suddenly brought one of her batons down onto his shoulder, nearly breaking the bone and dropping him to the floor.

Mockingbird cackled and slunk away, watching as Bobbi attacked him again.

"Bobbi! Stop!" Liam rolled out of the way as Bobbi furiously stomped

down where his head had been.

"I'll kill you myself!" She snarled. She twirled her batons, and Mockingbird flew out of the room. She locked the door and waited at the window, watching as her other self charged at Liam again.

"Bobbi!" Liam ducked another blow, and a baton sank deep into the drywall. She pulled it free and came at Liam again, jumping up into the air and spinning, bringing her batons down in a devastating arc aimed at Liam's head.

He caught the batons in his hands, absorbing the shock. His eyes focused on hers, and he shoved her back.

"Bobbi, please, don't make me do this!"

She kicked high at his head, and he quickly blocked the leg with one hand. She wrapped her leg around his arm, threw herself up and spun in the air, kicking him in the face on the way down.

Liam was knocked back and blood filled his mouth as Bobbi landed and swung her batons out again. She threw one at his face, which he deflected with an arm. It flew into the wall, but flew back as she stretched her arm out.

He wasn't ready for it, and the returning baton cracked him in the back of the head. He dove down to the floor to avoid another attack, and tried to roll into her feet. She jumped over him easily and spun around, heaving her batons down on him. He took them to the gut and upper thigh, and only absorbed half the energy. His focus was wavering, and he wasn't keeping up.

He jumped to his feet and kicked off the wall, hoping to tackle Bobbi to the ground. She caught him and threw him over her head, slamming him into the wall while she tucked and rolled away. Her batons twirled dangerously, splitting the air in a shrill whine. She tossed one towards him as he regained his feet, and this time, he caught it.

It was a bad move. She brought it back to her hand, and he was jerked off balance. She cracked the other one into his temple, and he barely absorbed enough to keep himself conscious. He grabbed her around the waist and picked her up, throwing her upside down and slamming her to the floor.

He tried to hold her down, or at least contain her, but she kicked him in the back of the head. As soon as he let go of her hands, she boosted herself up and elbowed him in the face, sending him reeling yet again.

Still Mockingbird watched at the window, cackling as the two fought. Liam looked at her, and then at Bobbi, realizing what he'd have to do.

She finally went for the obvious weapon and drew one of the side arms she'd taken from the armory.

"Momâ€¦ pleaseâ€¦" Liam spit out a mouthful of blood and tried to see through the fast-swelling eye. "Don't do thisâ€¦ I know you can hear

meâ€¦"

"And I know you're a liar! You're supposed to be my _son_?" She demanded, her eyes hard and unforgiving. "You're a loser. A disappointment. You can't protect your sister, you couldn't protect me, and you can't defend yourself. I hate you, and everything you are."

She reached for the trigger, right as Liam moved. He jumped up and grabbed her arm, forcing it to swing wide. The gun drifted farther away from him, towards the glass, before it fired.

A dull 'bang' filled the room, there was sick 'thud' and Bobbi hit the floor. Liam landed right beside her, bloodied and beaten.

"Whatâ€¦? Liam!" Bobbi finally saw through the mirage, and recognized Liam on the floor beside her.

He was bleeding profusely, his eyes were closed, and he was barely breathing. He'd taken a beating when they'd landed; he'd nearly had a heart attack on two different occasions, and now he'd been thrashed by her. His body couldn't take the abuse.

She rolled him over onto his back, grabbing his chin in her hand to force him to look at her.

"Liam! Liam!"

He didn't answer.

* * *

><p>Captain Rogers. Thor. Bruce Banner. Clint Barton. Natasha Romanoff. Tony Stark. The Avengers, victors of the battle of New York and heroes known throughout the world.<p>

They all stood in the Triskelion, looking at Director Fury as he briefed them.

"We've got a new threat, and one that I don't think any of us could have seen coming." Fury stared, leaning on the massive metal table in front of him.

"Travelers from another time have invaded our world, trying to warn us of a threat within our own ranks." Fury tapped the table, and the casualty reports all flooded onto the screen. S.H.I.E.L.D. agents that had been targeted by Insight, wealthy business men and women, normal looking civilians, all taken out by Liam and Aria's list.

"Hot on their heels was a monster unlike any other. He was once human. Now, he's a monster. He's attacked our agents. He survived the collapse of ancient Kree temple. And now he's out there, probably plotting all of our deaths." Fury summed up.

Natasha spoke up, looking up from the sobering list of names below her.

"Who are these time travelers?"

Fury tapped a command on the screen, and surveillance photos taken at the Triskelion of Liam and Aria Hunter were magnified.

They all studied the faces carefully as Fury went on.

"If Hydra really was hiding in S.H.I.E.L.D., they're gone now. Half of S.H.I.E.L.D. is gone now, either way. We've got a new enemy on our hands with knowledge of future events and enough power to level a city. One of our allies from the future, Liam Hunter, has been lost."

Banner frowned. "How'd that happen?"

"Same way they came. A portal to the future opened up, and I ordered him to stop anything else that came through it. Instead, he and another agent were sucked through and haven't been heard from since."

Tony raised an eyebrow and then raised his hand, as in a classroom.

"Okay, so we're now on the lookout for a man who's on fire and a guy who may or may not be trapped in the future. I think Pepper spiked my coffee this morning because this sounds pretty trippy."

"Says the man in a flying metal suit." Fury argued.

"How are we supposed to stop a man who can't be touched?" Captain Rogers asked, brining up photos taken from Puerto Rico. They showed Noah flying high over the island, flaming wings and all.

"That's why I called you. We also have three rogue heli-carriers on their way to commit suicide over the Arctic, and a small probability that a portal will open up eighteen miles above the earth's surface, which may or may not have our mission time traveler and his mother, my agent, on the other side of it."

"This creature does not seem overly intimidating; I will gladly defeat it for you." Thor said confidently. Barton and Natasha both raised their eyebrows at him questioningly.

"You'll take Doctor Banner and Captain Rogers along too, just for support." Fury said with a smile. Thor shrugged and nodded amiably.

"Ooh ooh! I'll take the heli-carriers!" Tony said, jumping up and down childishly.

"Yes you will. I want them recovered. Agents Barton and Romanoff will make sure it happens. Getting onto the things will be difficult enough; they've stayed cloaked since they launched." Fury ordered.

"Alright, I guess I can babysit. Avengers, disassemble!" Tony shouted dramatically.

14. Chapter 14

* * *

><p>The Avengers had a jet; Tony had built one of the best around for the team to use, after New York. But Captain Roger's team would need to it track and find Noah.<p>

Naturally, Iron man and his team had to take another vehicle capable of flight and transporting large amounts of personnel.

Coulson waited on the ramp of the bus, smiling in a friendly way as the three Avengers walked out onto the tarmac. He'd met them all before, of course, but they thought he was dead. They'd gotten a quick briefing on that before hand, but Tony especially still looked a little unsure.

Barton and Romanoff were first to walk onto the ramp, nodding respectfully at Coulson as if all were normal. The rest of Coulson's team as well as Mac were just inside, trying to look professional. Except for May, who only looked bored.

"Hello there Coulson. Evidently you _didn't_ go towards the light. How's that workin' for you?" Tony asked as he approached Coulson. He had his suit collapsed into a large, red briefcase he was struggling to carry. He was also wearing a pair of cheap, pink sunglasses for some odd reason.

"I'll let you know." Coulson said guardedly.

"Permission to come on board, captain?" He asked, stepping up to the edge of the ramp but going no farther.

"That's with the Navy. We're S.H.I.E.L.D. Different rules." Coulson led the way onto the bus with Tony shrugging and following along after a moment. He glanced at the rest of Coulson's team and whipped off his sunglasses as he passed May.

"Ah. The cavalry. I was told to impress you. Here you are." He handed the sunglasses and bowed low.

May gingerly took the glasses and raised an eyebrow. "So you bought me a pair of sunglasses for a dollar?"

"Hey! It was ninety-nine cents!" He almost seemed upset, and then pulled out another identical pair and put it on. "Let's get this party started!"

And with that, he walked grandly up the staircase to the upper deck. Barton and Barton watched him go, waiting until he was gone to speak.

"Don't be afraid to kick him in the balls just because he's Iron Man." Romanoff said seriously. May almost smiled and tucked her sunglasses in her pocket.

"I won't."

Skye looked ready to laugh and covered her mouth to avoid it, Fitz and Simmons were completely star-struck and just kept staring at the two agents in front of them, while Ward stood near Skye protectively. Mac walked boldly up to the two newcomers, offering a hand and making introductions. May headed for the cockpit to start take off procedures.

* * *

><p>Coulson was watching the two in the briefing room, trying not to laugh. Aria Hunter had been brought along as well, since she was responsible for hacking Insight in the first place. Tony was staring at her from across the table, and there was genuine fear in his eyes.<p>

"So. You're from the future."

"So. You're Iron Man."

"Have we met? Or is it will we meet? Will we met?" Tony asked, finally settling on the right question.

"Yes and no. I was at your funeral." Aria said seriously. Coulson watched closely, grinning at the sight of Tony Stark being manipulated by the tiny, cute, Aria Hunter.

"Oh really? Was it nice? Flowers, crying women€¦?"

"Actually they threw a party. They figured that's how you would want to go out." Aria said ruefully. She sat down in a chair and started typing away on the table's screen, completely ignoring Tony.

"Hmm. Sounds like me. Now who's they? Because I want to make it clear right now that Barton's not invited." Tony sat down opposite her and watched as she examined networks and satellite feeds.

"He was dead already. 'They' were the people on this bus and a few others. Thor was already back on Asgard. I was only a year old."

Tony grunted and watched her work, obviously trying to process the information.

"Isn't all of this classified? Don't you want to preserve the purity of the time-line or some such BS?"

"Trust me. Nothing in that future is worth preserving." Aria finally found what she was looking for and brought up a screen demanding a password.

"Great. Access is firewalled and the pass codes have been changed. They locked the door with my virus inside." Aria leaned back in her chair and glanced at Tony.

"No problem. Jarvis, take it away!" He watched as his personal AI downloaded himself onto the bus' mainframe and started decoding the firewall obediently.

"I'm surprised you're okay with all of this. Wasn't hijacking Insight what you came all this way to do?" Tony asked suspiciously.

Aria sighed and shook her head, her age finally showing. Dark circles had slowly formed over her eyes from the lack of sleep and constant stress; she looked ready to drop any second.

"Insight was meant to destroy Hydra and a lot of other threats you don't know about. That's done. If you want Insight back, its yours. I just want to find my brother and get away from all of this."

Tony nodded slowly, suddenly serious as well. "Don't worry kid. We'll get him back."

"Sir? I've managed to gain entry to the system." Jarvis' British drawl came over the speakers, and Tony leapt into action.

"Okay! What've we got? Give me the highlights."

"Most of the ammunition carried by all three of the Insight carriers is depleted. I've been archiving reports from around the globe; over three thousand confirmed kills since launch."

Tony whistled and shook his head. "That's a lot of paperwork. What else?"

"All three carriers are heading for the North Pole now; they'll converge in less than an hour."

"Lovely. Hope someone packed the earmuffs."

"The ship's crews were severely panicked and have been trying to regain access. Most of them have evacuated on the Quin-jets, but one carrier in particular still has a full complement."

"Oddâ€¦ Any obvious reason why?"

"No sir." Jarvis finished his report and displayed all of the information he'd retrieved for Aria and Tony to see.

"Hydra." Aria sighed.

"Pardon?"

"The last crew is Hydra, or mostly Hydra. They couldn't be taken out because they were on the wrong side of the guns. We should have thought of thatâ€¦" Aria shook her head and blinked in frustration.

"Shouldn't be a problem. If they are Hydra; let's not rule out the possibility that they're just stupid. Jarvis, patch me in."

Tony messed with the small radio in his ear and Jarvis made the connection.

"This is Tony Stark A.K.A. Iron Man A.K.A. your bossâ€¦"

Coulson stepped into the room, followed by Barton, Romanoff and the rest of his team.

"Actually, I'm the boss."

"Right. He's the boss. Anyway… what's up? You're standing on some very expensive hardware that is currently headed for a frozen hell…"

"Language, please." Coulson said mildly. First Tony and then Aria looked at him strangely, but he continued.

"…So I recommend getting the 'heck' off of that boat. Over."

Jarvis patched the captain's response over the speakers so they could all hear it.

"This is the captain of Insight One; we welcome any and all assistance in regaining control of this vessel, but regret to inform you evacuation is impossible." A very crisp, polite, and arrogant voice greeted them over the speakers.

"Hmm. Sounds British. Does he sound like he's from Great Britain to you guys?" He asked Coulson's team, leaning back in his chair to see them.

"Wales, actually." Romanoff corrected.

"Ah, sorry. Does that guy sound British to you whales?"

"This is Agent Aria Hunter of Agent Coulson's advance team. We have direct orders from Director Fury to evacuate and salvage your ship. It is currently on a collision course with two other Insight carriers; evacuate now." Aria snapped, pulling up her own com link. It was patched into the small black node in her ear, which was evidently also a radio.

"Agent Hunter, we have orders of our own. We will not be evacuating." The voice replied angrily.

"What's our current position?" Barton asked, narrowing his eyes at the screen on the wall. Aria had pulled up a map of the Insight carriers locations; all were within the Arctic Circle now.

"We're ten minutes out now." May shouted from the cockpit.

Romanoff looked impressed.

"Wow. This thing's fast."

"Faster than a giant flying aircraft carrier? I hope so." Coulson said proudly.

"What's our plan of attack?" Ward asked, speaking for the first time.

Tony started to speak, but Aria cut him off with a glare.

"Depends on what our goals are. I say we evacuate the last carrier and let nature run its course on the other two."

Coulson shook his head and lost his smile. "Not going to happen. We

have orders to secure all three carriers and have them intact when we fly them back home."

"Hmm. Intact? You may just have called the wrong team…" Tony joked, looking at Barton and Romanoff.

"We should probably figure out if those are real S.H.I.E.L.D. agents or Hydra plants before we land." Romanoff suggested mildly.

Their question was answered by May, who shouted a warning and suddenly threw the bus into a barrel roll. They were all knocked off their feet and tumbled around the interior the plane knocking into furniture and walls.

Aria ended up in Tony's arms, while the rest ended up in a huge pile of tangled limbs.

"Incoming air-to-air missiles! Lots of them!" May shouted again, throwing the bus into another crazy maneuver.

"I think they just might be Hydra!" Fitz shouted, grabbing the counter beside him for support. He grabbed Simmons and stopped her from slamming into Ward.

Tony gently set Aria aside, who was desperately crawling away from him, and reached for his suitcase. His hand touched the outer skin, and it immediately started to unfold.

"Come to papa…"

Seconds later, Iron Man burst out of the lower cargo door, heading for the nose of the plane. May tried not to hit the streak of red and gold as he practically landed on the nose of the bus.

"Alright! Just like asteroids!" He said into the radio. With a powerful blast, he shot off of the nose and headed for the next wave of missiles. Beams of light shot out of his chest and hands, detonating the missiles in midair. Fiery explosions rained down around the bus, which was still miraculously unharmed.

"Oh yeah! That was a ten-pointer!" Tony shot another small projectile out of the sky, mere yards before it hit the cockpit glass.

Inside the bus, May could finally see the Insight carrier. There were dozens of armed agents already on the top of the aircraft, lined up in defensive formations. A gun battery came online as they got closer, and Iron man flew in for the kill.

"Hold on! This is going to get rough!"

* * *

><p>Captain Rogers, Doctor Banner and Thor were all sitting in the back of the Avenger's jet, listening to the sound of the engines purring and the wind hitting the outer hull.<p>

"Do we have a lock on this thing yet?" Rogers asked as Banner leaned over the computer console.

"Satellite imaging has nothing; local media in the area lost sight of

him after he took off, and we've had no other reports to go on."
Banner sounded as frustrated as they were. They'd been flying for
close to an hour with no real destination.

"Great. He's a human torch and no one can find him." Rogers
complained.

Thor looked contemplative, and suddenly walked into the cockpit.
Rogers raised and eyebrow and followed him as he walked straight up
to their pilot.

"Please land this craft immediately." He ordered simply, looking out
the window at the sky above them.

Their pilot, an agent Rogers hadn't met before, looked to him
questioningly. He nodded behind Thor's back, and she slowly started
to descend.

"What's your plan?"

"To ask for assistance." Thor explained, walking to the back of the
plane and lowering the ramp.

Banner leaned back in his chair, shooting Rogers a shocked look.
"He's asking for help? The end times are hereâ€¦"

As soon as the jet landed on an old dirt road in some kind of farming
county, Thor hopped down into the gravel.

"Thor! You realize we're in the middle of no where, right?" Rogers
asked, stepping out right beside him.

"Heimdall! Open the Bifrost!"

There was a bright flash of light, and Thor was gone. A smoking rune
was imprinted into the road, and Rogers let his arms fall to his
side.

"Did he seriously just leave?" Banner asked, looking over Rogers'
shoulder.

"Yes. It appears he did." He sat down on the ramp and set his shield
beside him, waiting for Thor to reappear. Banner stayed inside the
jet, typing away on the computer.

Their pilot came to stand behind Rogers, looking out at the empty
countryside. She was pretty; blondish hair, fair skin, and a certain
familiar look to her that Rogers couldn't place.

"You can sit down if you want." Rogers motioned for her to join him,
and she did after a second.

"I'm Steve." He awkwardly held out a hand, which she
shook.

"Sharon."

"Nice to meet your, Sharon." Rogers went back to looking out at the
dark sky, starting to worry Thor wasn't coming back at all.

"Does he do this a lot?" Sharon asked, nodding at the singed gravel.

Rogers shrugged. "More often than you'd think."

They were both silent for a minute before Rogers spoke up again, hesitantly. As if embarrassed to ask something, but not able to hold it in.

"Do I… Do I know you? Have we met?"

Sharon smiled and grimaced, annoyed that Fury had asked her of all agents to be his pilot.

"I'm your next door neighbor."

There was another pause as Rogers put it together, narrowing his eyes and gritting his teeth.

"Keeping an eye on me?"

"Orders are orders."

"Why'd Fury have you fly us? Doesn't this break your cover?"

"I don't think he knows who to trust anymore. I have certain… connections… that make me trustworthy." Sharon admitted slowly.

"Like what?"

Sharon's answer was cut off by another bright pillar of light, and Rogers instinctively covered Sharon with his shield. They both hunkered behind it, right up to the point Thor walked back into the jet and sat down.

"Heimdall has located the man we seek. Please take us to a place called Michigan." Thor smiled.

Rogers shook his head and stood up, offering Sharon a hand as well. She hurried to the cockpit and fired up the engines again while Rogers sat across from Thor, giving him a death look.

"Have I interrupted something?" Thor asked, shooting Banner a questioning look.

"Next time, a little warning would be nice." Rogers answered.

"I asked the pilot to land; I assumed this was warning enough." Thor said simply. Rogers shook his head and laughed while Sharon got them in the air again.

They flew for another hour, heading through the dark skies almost straight north. Banner was still skimming websites, news stations and satellite images for their target, but aside from Thor's suggestion, he couldn't find anything.

"So Heimdall can locate anyone, anywhere?" Rogers asked skeptically.

"Yes, but some people are easier to find than others. A flying, flaming man suddenly appearing in the sky was fairly easy to locate." Thor explained, tossing his hammer up and down anxiously.

"Captain Rogers? We've got an incoming heat signature that's off the charts!" Sharon yelled suddenly.

Rogers and Thor looked at each other before running to the back of the jet.

"Apparently _very_ easy to locate!" Rogers joked. Thor literally punched the control that lowered the door, and twirling his hammer rapidly, he shot out of the jet.

"Did he justâ€¦?" Banner stood up to look at the fleeting image of Thor, shooting past one of the windows.

"Sharon, take us down!" Rogers ordered, annoyed that he'd only gotten her first name. He was sure she had a more official rank, but all he knew was 'Sharon'.

"We're already descending!" She shouted back.

A huge fireball lit up the sky, and lightning cracked dangerously close by.

"Forget it, I'm going now!" Captain Rogers ran forward and jumped from the ramp, straight into the howling wind. He curled up into a ball and leaned on his shield, which was facing down, as he plummeted down into the trees below.

Sharon looked at Banner, who looked straight back her.

"Well that's a hard exit to followâ€¦" He sighed and took off his glasses, setting them on the seat beside him. He then stripped off his shirt and kicked out of his shoes before jumping off the ramp after Rogers.

Thor had tackled Noah in midair, and a mess of lightning and flames shot out of the sky. They hit the ground rolling and left a massive crater in the damp earth; Thor slammed into a tree while Noah slid to a stop in the grass.

Flaming wings reached high over his head and baked the surrounding woods, wilting the grass and trees.

"_Leave me alone!"_ His voice was rough and harsh as he spoke. He'd cooled off considerably from his transformation; now he had actual bone visible beneath his fiery skin, and flesh seemed not far off. As Thor watched, the inferno cooled a fraction a degree more, and his form became more solid.

Thor's response was to charge forward, swinging his hammer down in an arc, straight towards Noah's head. Noah leapt forward to dodge the blow, landing on his feet and extending his arms.

Twins beams of white flames shot out at Thor's back and were inches away from hitting him when a red, white and blue shield got in the way.

Captain Rogers jumped in at the last second, his shield in front of him as the beam of flames hit him. The inferno was deflected around them, and jets of orange flame seared the air they were breathing.

But Vibranium was vibration proof, not heat proof. The metal actually started to soften and bend as Rogers held it, sweating as the temperature soared.

"Enough!" Thor brought his hammer down with a bolt of lightning behind it, and the very ground around them exploded into the air. Burnt soil, Avengers, and Noah all flew up into the night, breaking Noah's attack.

As they landed, Noah, glided down easily on his wings.

"My turn!"

His drew his wings back, the flames turned blue, and he flapped them forward with incredible force. A fiery wind blew Thor and Rogers back, as well as all of the loose soil and plants around them.

They were headed for the tree line, blown head over heels, as a new shape emerged. A massive green man burst out of the trees, roaring in rage as he hit the blowing wind. He surged through it, sprinting towards Noah easily.

With one hand, Hulk backhanded Noah into the trees before leaping in after him, still roaring at the top of his lungs. Noah landed on his back, momentarily stunned. It was all Hulk needed.

He landed on Noah's chest and started pounding his face with giant green fists, the ground shaking under the barrage. Thor and Rogers picked themselves up and ran back towards the fighting; hoping Hulk wouldn't take out Noah and decide to go for them next.

They shouldn't have worried. A bright light shone out through the small strand of tree, and Noah took off into the sky, with Hulk still clutching at him, pounding away on the fiery man.

Hulk screamed in pain as the flames got more intense, but he refused to let go.

"Thor?" Rogers asked, watching the two struggle.

Thor raised his hammer into the sky and the clouds gathered again. He threw his hammer at the pair flying above them, and Mjolnir hit its target easily. Lightning crashed and flames spread, while two bodies fell from the sky. One of them was still simmering, the other was rapidly shrinking.

"Oh noâ€¦" Rogers started running, but Thor was way ahead of him.

"I've got him!" He grabbed Mjolnir as it returned to him and flew off, headed straight for the falling Banner.

But Noah wasn't done. His wings extended yet again, and he took off into the clouds as Thor caught Banner. Rogers watched in wonder as the Inhuman flew off into the distance.

Sharon had landed the jet in the next clearing, but flew closer now that the fight was over. She landed near Steve, who gratefully climbed aboard as Thor returned, carrying Banner's singed and unconscious form.

"Take us back up! That thing's headed north again!" Rogers ordered, wiping the sweat and ash from his face. Sharon nodded and the ramp rose as the jet once again headed for the sky.

"That creature has angered meâ€¦" Thor said darkly, gripping his hammer with white knuckles.

"I know the feeling. Where's the rest of the team headed? We might need Stark for this one." Rogers admitted, heading for the cockpit.

"I've been monitoring their radio calls; it looks like they're headed for the North Pole." Sharon told him, pressing the throttle all the way forward.

"What about the creature?"

"It's still headed northâ€¦ straight for the Insight carriers!"

* * *

><p>May strained and struggled against the bus' controls, forcing the massive plane into position. Any lower and the carrier's main guns would be able to hit them, any higher and the turret they'd seen up top would in range. She was maneuvering the bus around the lip of the carrier, right in the sweet spot that nothing could quite see her in.<p>

Iron Man had disappeared into the fight, trying to draw the cannon's fire while the rest of the team tried to land. With one final push from the engines, the bus roared up over the edge and slammed down on the deck below.

Metal scraped metal, sparks flew, and the waiting Hydra agents ran as the bus spun and careened onto the deck. It slowly spun as its momentum died, bringing the rear ramp forward and into the fight.

The second the huge plane stopped, the ramp was blown off and the agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. attacked.

Barton, Romanoff, Ward, Coulson, Skye, Mac and Aria all flew out of the rear of the bus, weapons firing. The Hydra troops opened up with their own rifles, sending dozens of rounds into the fray.

Barton fired arrows at amazing speeds, silencing guns on the right. Romanoff fired from both guns in her hands as she walked, calmly cutting the enemy down. Ward and Skye stuck together, leaping over one of the barricades and taking the Hydra agents on hand to hand. Mac joined them, improvised Shax in hand.

Coulson and Aria brought up the rear; Coulson with his massive rifle, named only as 'Coulson's Revenge', firing beams of orange light at the larger gun emplacements on the deck.

Aria had yet to really join into the action; she was waiting for a clear shot at the enemy. She didn't have to wait long.

A group of three Hydra agents managed to get past the lines of fire, heading straight for Coulson and Aria. She stepped forward to meet them, hands outstretched.

"Big mistake…" She whispered coyly. The three men suddenly stopped running, sank to their knees, and started screaming at the top of their lungs. Aria ran forward and kicked one of them in the temple, snapped another one's neck, and kicked the third in the throat. They all went down and she kept going, wading into the battle and decimating any living Hydra she found.

May ran out to the ramp as soon as she could, watching as their small army pounded Hydra's position.

"Did you save any for me?" She asked in a level tone. Coulson shrugged and fired again, taking out a fifty-caliber machine gun pointed at Barton.

"I think there are still a few left…"

They both heard another voice over the radio, and turned as they heard the telltale sounds of Iron Man approaching. "I hereby call in the cavalry!"

Iron Man flew in low and slow, scooped up May in his arms, and took again for the bridge. Coulson knew Tony would regret the decision as soon as he let her down.

He made the smart move and tossed her through a window he'd shot out, straight into a room full of Hydra. Four men with side-arms turned to face her, and she leapt into action.

She dove over a computer console in front of her, kicking one man in the face as she went. As she landed, she threw a rolling chair at another, knocking him over. A third reached in from behind her, trying to wrap his arms around her throat. She pulled him forward, elbowed his nose, and flipped him over the console and onto the floor.

The fourth started firing at her, so she ducked behind cover and reached for her own weapon. She didn't need to.

A split second later, Aria and then Skye flew into the windows as well, crashing in simultaneously on either side of the man.

Aria was on his right, and backhanded him in the face. Skye kicked his knee out from under him, Aria pulled his head down and kneed him in the head, and Skye jerked him back and slammed his head into the deck. He was out cold, and May stood up.

"Someone shoot that arrogant, gold-plated piece of-"

"Language!" Tony chided, flying in a second later. "Try and hack into the guidance system from here; I gotta fly." He tapped a command on a screen and let Jarvis in before vanishing out the window again.

"I'm going to kill him!" May growled. Skye and Aria immediately went to work on the computers, typing rapidly on the keyboards.

"You're already in? Where'd you learn to hack like that?" Skye demanded, just now cracking her own station.

"I learned from the best…" Aria joked. She brought up the navigation controls and started deleting the old course as Coulson radioed in.

"Skye, Aria, pick up the pace! The other two carriers are here!"

They all looked out the window at the icy world beyond them. Far below, the Arctic ice glared up at the intruders, while on either side, identical heli-carriers drifted ever closer.

"You hard-coded the engine's trajectory into the mainframe?" Skye demanded, shooting a horrified look at Aria.

"No, I programmed a worm virus to hard-code the trajectory into the mainframe!"

"What about the backup servers, if we crash the main system…"

"Then we'll have a three minute reboot time. We're about twenty seconds away from either ice or other carriers!" Aria snapped.

"So what do you want to do?"

"Vertical lift coordinates are tied into the other ships! If we break the link and manually enter in a new one…"

"We'll fly right over them!" Skye finished.

"Whatever you're going to do, hurry!" May snapped. The other carriers were dangerously close. Far below them, the rest of the team had managed to take the flight deck. They started to move below decks to clear the rest of the ship as Skye groaned.

"Oh come on! It's not loading fast enough!" She pounded on the console with her fist as she glanced again out the windows.

"Jarvis? You there?" Aria asked suddenly, remembering the third member of their hacking team.

"And awaiting orders."

"See if you can divert more processors to getting this command in through the rest of the protocols!"

"Of course."

All three women watched as the command started to execute, and the massive engines on the sides of the ship lit up.

They were so close that May could pick out details on the other ship's decks. The engines roared, the ship strained under the pressure, but slowly the ship started to rise.

"Are we going to clear it?" May asked nervously, bracing herself against a nearby console.

"I don't knowâ€¦" Skye whispered.

Everything was silent as the other ships faded out of sight. Then a massive explosion sounded below them, and screeching metal could be heard even from up in the bridge.

"Tell me that's not us!" Skye demanded, bringing up a camera on the bottom of the ship.

A few yards below them, the other two empty carriers had collided. Fires erupted, metal warped, and the great ships slowly fell down to the ice below. They three women sighed in relief and May hit her radio.

"Coulson? We lost the other two carriers, but this one is clear."

"Glad to hear it; we were getting kind of nervous down here." Coulson said shakily.

A beeping alert suddenly sounded behind them, and Aria swooped in to read the data pouring onto a screen.

"We've got another signature coming in! Wait, two! A modified Quin-jet andâ€¦ Noahâ€¦"

* * *

><p>Noah flapped his wings beside him, watching as they slowly cooled into flesh and bone, just like the rest of him. Going through the mist had given him even more power and control, but at a price. His own body had melted away, forming something completely new. He was slowly learning to master it, but he could only glimpse the power that was coming. He flapped harder, heading for the lone carrier floating above the ice.<p>

Close behind him was the Avenger's jet, firing continually with its lone gun. Massive rounds poured out of the barrel, but didn't even get close to Noah before they melted from the residual heat.

Noah circled the heli-carrier from above, surveying his new ship eagerly. An entire hel-carrier, all his for the taking. The Avenger's jet landed below him, and all of his enemies came running out to face him.

Captain Rogers, Agent Romanoff, Agent Barton, Iron Man, Thor, Bruce Banner; the Avengers who'd died in his past, and their future.

Coulson, May, Ward, Skye, Fitz, Simmons, Agent Sharon Carter, and even Aria. He watched as they gathered to watch him, all in a group on the top of the deck. He laughed at how easy it would be.

* * *

><p>"I think he's coming in for a landingâ€¦" Fitz moaned, reaching

for his side arm.<p>

"He is no match for all of us!" Thor sneered, glaring at the fiery figure above them.

"What is that?" Skye pointed up at the sky, to the left of Noah.

"Is that a Quin-jet?"

"It looks like it's coming out of orbitâ€¦"

"Or maybe from a hundred thousand feet?"

Noah didn't see the jet coming until it was too late. The nose of the strange craft hit Noah head on, plastering him on. He screamed in pain and anger as the little ship rose back into the sky.

* * *

><p>Liam was tired. He was sore. He was angry. But he was home, and so was his mother. So when he saw the blazing silhouette of Noah, he made a snap judgment call. He was no pilot, but flying in a straight line wasn't hard, and with Bobbi beside him correcting his mistakes, he had no problems.<p>

"This is Liam Hunter of the Iron Eagle. I have agent Morse here with me and we are currently headed for the upper atmosphere with Noah Baxter in tow." Liam said calmly into the radio. Bobbi was strapped in right beside him as they climbed ever higher, with Noah screaming in front of the glass.

"Liam? Where did you come from?" Aria's voice greeted him over the radio, and he grinned as he heard her voice.

"Thirty years in the future. Long story, which I hope to tell soon."

"What are you doing? Where are you taking Noah?"

"Low earth orbit. As I've just learned, reentry sucks." Liam explained.

The jet flew higher and higher as pulse engines powered by an Iron Man inspired Arc reactor plowed on. They had guns and missiles aplenty on the Iron Eagle, but Liam knew those wouldn't do the trick. As Noah realized what has happening, he redoubled his efforts to get loose.

But the wind shear effect on him as the jet flew higher kept him wrapped snugly in place. He'd melted his way into the metal, and as it was cooled by the near vacuum they were flying in, he was welded into place.

Liam pushed the throttle up all the way, demanding even more from the engines. Finally, when the nav-computer read one hundred and ten thousand feet, he decided enough was enough.

The nose of the Iron Eagle was actually a small missile, designed to penetrate heavy armor plating. Noah had melted through the actual warhead, but the thrusters hidden inside still worked fine. Noah

flipped the switch, pulled on the trigger, and the nose
detached.

The missile shot outwards, headed for deep space, with a now dying
Noah welded in place. The Iron Eagle stopped, and started to
fall.

"You know, cool as this jet is, it isn't meant for orbital flights!"
Bobbi reminded him.

"I know."

"We took a huge risk here!"

"I know." Liam drove the stick lower, and the secondary nose of the
Iron Eagle pointed down, straight at the ice far below them. The
metal underneath was curved to a sharp point, almost like a beak.

"I told you I'd get you home!" Liam said with a wry smile, listening
to the rattle of the jet as it plummeted downwards.

"Apparently next time I need to be more specific!" Bobbi replied,
gripping her controls tightly. But she suddenly tore her gaze away
from the windshield to look at Liam. "No matter how this ends, I'm
glad I got to meet you."

Liam nodded, meeting her gaze as they fell. "Right back at you."

* * *

><p>The large group of S.H.I.E.L.D. and Avengers stood and watched as
the jet fell out of the sky.<p>

"Your brother is in that thing?" Ward asked Aria, glancing sideways
at her. She nodded firmly.

"He'll make it."

They could all see the front of the jet as it came screaming down
into the atmosphere, red hot from the pressure of the air. It fell
almost in line with the deck, and they realized at the same time that
it would hit the carrier. No one moved or spoke as they watched the
two pilots force the jet to slow; pulse engines came out of the wings
instead of the usual turbines and fired steadily, slowing their fall
even more.

They slammed down onto the deck with a huge crash, and everyone
shielded their eyes as the wind from their wings hit the group. All
except Aria.

She was running full out, headed straight for the rear ramp of the
ship. Her boots pounded on the deck, the ramp slowly lowered, and
Liam emerged from inside. Standing beside him was Agent Morse,
looking shaken but alive.

Aria hit them head on and wrapped both in a massive hug, squeezing
them as tightly as she could. Liam laughed as he held her, while
Morse smiled and squeezed her back. The three of them sank to the
floor of the jet, exhausted from the battle.

Coulson watched the three carefully, and then looked around at the Avengers beside him. His phone buzzed in his pocket, and he pulled it out to see three missed calls.

"Hello? Director Fury?"

"Coulson! What's going on up there?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you, sir."

* * *

><p>The bus was now full, no doubt about it. And yet it seemed the only place appropriate to celebrate, so they had all piled in. Their last carrier was flying steadily for the Triskelion, with the Avenger's jet, the Iron Eagle, and the bus all onboard.<p>

Liam and Bobbi were the center of attention, much to their disappointment. Bobbi had been glad to see the real Mac again, while Aria and Liam were deeply considering running off again. But they were on the bus for now, and everyone was demanding answers.

"The Iron Eagle was a jet Mac, Fitz and I all put together as a hobby. It was designed for Aria to fly; we were going to give it to her as a birthday present." Liam explained. "We never got the chance, and it sat in its hangar for a few years."

"Yeah, about that, do you mind if I take a look at it sometime? I promise to have her back by midnight." Stark pleaded, looking out the window at the somewhat batter Iron Eagle.

"Not a chance. That reminds me though, we brought gifts." Liam said with a laugh. He reached for the duffel bag they'd taken out earlier and unzipped the top.

"For you, Agent Coulson; Captain Roger's shield, mark two." He tossed the wrist-mounted plate to Coulson, who gingerly tried it on. With a flick of his wrist, the metal plates folded out and snapped into place. His eyes grew wide and his smile turned into an open mouthed grin as he looked it over.

"Agent May; designed and built specifically for you." Bobbi reached in and gingerly handed her the long staff and gloves. May raised an eyebrow and looked it over, giving it an experimental twirl in her hand.

"I'm keeping this." She said firmly.

"And it matches your new shades!" Tony said with a smile, elbowing her boldly. She shot him a look that made him stand behind Barton and Romanoff.

"Mac, a Shax, new and improved model." Liam presented him with the shining rifle-axe combo, and he scooped it up like it was an infant.

"Oh yeahâ€¦"

"Fitz, this one's yours." Bobbi handed him the heavy handgun, being careful to hold it with the barrel pointing down.

"Oh wowâ€¦ this is heavyâ€¦" Fitz took it carefully and examined the different angles and details of it, slowly getting a smile on his face.

"I'm sure you'll figure out how to use it. Simmons, we didn't forget you." Liam passed her the twin knives, which made her eyes turn into saucers.

"Are you sure? I think Ward or May would love these!" She argued, trying to shove them back into Liam's hands.

"I'll show you how to use them. Trust me, it'll come naturally." Liam promised.

"What about us? Doesn't scary-future-santa have anything else?" Skye asked, folding her arms.

"No, not really. But from what Aria tells me you're a weapon in your own right now." Liam said gently.

"That goes for the rest of you, too." Bobbi turned the bag upside down to prove her point.

"So what now?" Aria asked Liam as she sat beside him on the small couch.

"According to Fury, I own you." Coulson answered. "The carrier's going to Gonzales to replace the Iliad. The Iron Eagle is still on the table."

"Oh, dibs!" Tony interjected, raising his hand high.

"Not going to happen." Liam and Aria both said at once.

"We do have something for you, on second thought." Liam said, slipping his hand in his pocket. He pulled out a tiny flash drive no longer than a finger nail and tossed it to Captain Rogers.

"That has a list of all threats and missions you and your team tackle for the next few years. I remember another set of siblings currently living in Sokovia you might be interested in." Liam hinted. Captain Rogers nodded and passed the drive to Romanoff who plugged it into a tablet.

"Wait, I have another question." Bobbi turned to Liam and Aria again, leaning on the counter as she spoke.

"I saw you give out codenames for guns, jets, and even my doppelganger in the future. What about the rest of us?"

They all perked up a little at the question, so the siblings obliged.

"Well, there's Captain America, obviously. Iron Man kind of named himself. Thor, enough said, and the Hulk of course." Aria listed.

"Then it gets a little more creative. Agent Romanoff we called Black Widow. Agent Barton was Hawkeye."

Both parties nodded in agreement, seeming to like the names.

"Then there was Agent Coulson; A.K.A. Commander America. A little dramatic, but you loved it." Aria laughed.

"Agent May was Black Dragon. Fitz was Turbo, courtesy of Mac. Simmons we called Xena, warrior princess. Ward, the old Ward, we nicknamed Cobra." Aria noticed the tension when she brought up the Ward of her timeline, but Liam came to the rescue.

"Mac was Warrior. Bobbi wasâ€¦ well, you already heard about that." Liam looked up his mother, who nodded soberly.

"Mockingbird."

"But after youâ€¦ when you were gone, we took the name ourselves. We never went anywhere alone, and we always went into the field together. So we were the Mockingbirds."

* * *

><p>In the end, the celebration broke up. The Avengers went to Sokovia, flown by Sharon Carter in their jet. Coulson's team got to work on their bus and tying up loose ends; Hydra that somehow survived Insight, artifacts that were too dangerous to leave lying in the shadows, and people that still needed to be rescued.<p>

Aria, Liam and Bobbi all took off in the Iron Eagle to find Lance Hunter, and finally reunite the whole family, for good.

End
file.